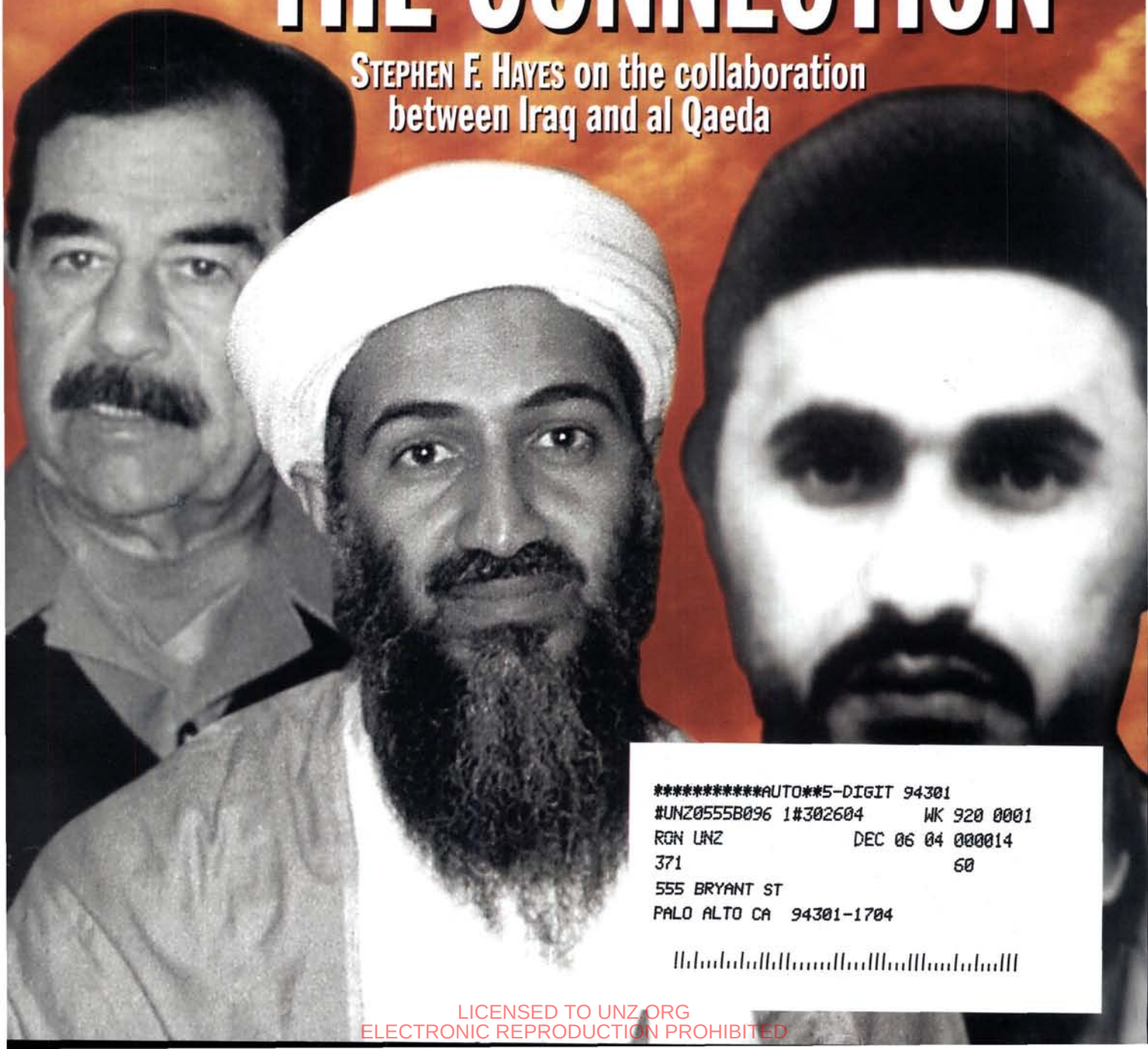
the weekly
Standard
JUNE 7, 2004 $3.95

THE RISE OF ZARQAWI
Steven Brooke

THE CONNECTION

STEPHEN F. HAYES on the collaboration between Iraq and al Qaeda



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the weekly Standard

THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the first week in January, the second week in July, the second week in August, and the second week in September) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-902-563-4723 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of THE WEEKLY STANDARD Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. THE WEEKLY STANDARD Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Nicholas H.B. Swezey 1-202-496-3355. Midwest Advertising Sales: 1-312-953-7236. Copyright 2004, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in THE WEEKLY STANDARD may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. THE WEEKLY STANDARD is a trademark of News America Incorporated.

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Plan Ten from Outer Space

Summer is upon us, and upper-middle-class, armchair Democrats—who are to national politics as Boston Red Sox fans are to American League baseball—are now experiencing their traditional every-fourth-summer malaise. They've got their favored presidential candidate. He's currently in first place. On paper, it looks as though the pennant and World Series are his to lose. So naturally, your better sorts of Blue America people are beginning to talk aloud about exactly how John Kerry's gonna blow it in the end.

For evidence of this predictable development, THE SCRAPBOOK refers its readers to an interesting disjunction between the online and print editions of last Thursday's *New York Times*.

In the print edition, one could find a story headlined "Democrats Ask If Careful Path Is Best for Kerry"—correspondent Adam Nagourney's excellent field report from inside the Demo-Bobo zeitgeist. President Bush is flat on his back, see; there are "three new polls" suggesting he's "more embattled than he has ever been." Which means Kerry ought now to be attacking Bush with all he's got, right? Why isn't Kerry doing it? What's the matter with him? Or wait, maybe that's wrong. Maybe "such a strategy entails risks of its own," and maybe Kerry just ought to start running out the clock. Only maybe *then*, everybody would start complaining that the Democrats were advancing "an anyone-but-Bush candidacy." Oh, dear: What to *do*?

As we say, it was an excellent story, and we liked it very much.

But we liked even better the online version, because there was more of it. Specifically, the otherwise identical print version of Nagourney's report mysteriously didn't contain the web edition's two-sentence description of a recent "phenomenon" in which Sen. Kerry "has arrived at big-dollar fundraising dinners to find empty chairs." It seems that "in their eagerness to defeat Mr. Bush, donors have written large checks to purchase a seat, but have not bothered to turn up to hear Mr. Kerry speak." This, presumably, because Kerry's . . . well, you know, an eyeglazing stiff.

Both versions of Adam Nagourney's story, incidentally, did contain the following, magical quote from Sen. Kerry himself:

> I think it's important to show [voters] you have a plan. If you don't have a plan, I don't think people are going to have much confidence in you. But I have a plan. I have a specific plan about manufacturing jobs, a specific plan about how we're going to fight for a fair playing field, a specific plan about science, technology investment. A specific plan about health care. I think you have to run an affirmative campaign, and I think you have to—I have to—show America that I have a plan for the country. And I do have a plan.

By THE SCRAPBOOK's count, that's nine "plans" in all.

Plan number ten: continued, ill-disguised support from the "news" editors of the *New York Times*. ♦

The O'Fascist Factor

Okay, there's no *real* Air America news to speak of this week. But there is a truly fabulous *New York Times* wedding announcement from Sunday, May 23. Which mentions Air America in passing—as the evidently hard-luck groom's current though questionably dependable source of income. THE SCRAPBOOK extends its mostly sincere congratulations to Billy Kimball, 44, executive producer of Air America's *The O'Franken Factor*, and Alexandra Manuela Vargas Hamilton, vice president for public relations and communications at Oscar de la Renta in New York.

The groom's father is a cartoonist for the *New Yorker*, the *Times* reports. And "the bride is a great-granddaughter of Getulio Vargas, who was the president and dictator of Brazil from 1930 to 1945, and was again president from 1950 to 1954."

Betcha Billy Kimball's great-grandfather-in-law never had to worry about *his* radio programs getting cancelled, huh? ♦

Iced Earth Rules, Dude!

What's that you say? Who is THE SCRAPBOOK's favorite heavy metal rock musician? We thought you'd never ask.

THE SCRAPBOOK's favorite heavy metal rock musician is Jon Schaffer, leader of Iced Earth, a Florida band whose latest album we have not heard—any more than we've heard the ones that came before it. But that's neither here nor there. What matters, instead, is that a heavy metal fan magazine called *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles* has become embroiled in a self-described "controversy" over its recently published interview with Schaffer. Did this published version, condensed by the editors for reasons of space, constitute a "distortion of Schaffer's views"? To answer the charge—and to "uphold the journalistic credibility of *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles*"—those editors have now posted a complete, unexpurgated tran-

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script of the Schaffer Q&A on their website. Readers are invited to "decide for yourself."

Our decision: Who cares? The interview's a classic. Add Iced Earth and Jon Schaffer to the Coalition of the Willing. For instance:

BW&BK: You mentioned that you're a proud American and you're proud of what the founding fathers achieved and the values they embraced. Do you think America still stands up for what the founding fathers proposed?

SCHAFFER: Yeah, I do. Does that mean we have not made mistakes? No, we have made mistakes. We're human beings and we will make mistakes. But . . . I will stand rock solid by the fact that I know this country has done a hundred times more good for other countries around the world than anybody else ever has. And that's just a fact. The facts speak for themselves. . . .

BW&BK: This next question is controversial so I'm letting you know before we proceed. Some political analysts have articulated the view that what happened on September 11 was justified due to America's presence in the Middle East, specifically Saudi Arabia. Some political analysts view it as retaliation for what the U.S. has done in the Middle East in the past. As a Canadian, I'm interested in hearing what you have to say about this view that's been put forth by analysts.

SCHAFFER: No, it wasn't justified. Not at all. And anybody who says so needs to have their f—n' head examined.

BW&BK: Do you think 9/11 will be viewed as the first event in the U.S. empire's decline and fall?

SCHAFFER: No. This is not an empire, first of all. If the United States was an empire, your country would be our 51st state. . . .

BW&BK: So you don't see the Bush regime as being cultural imperialists? You don't see them as trying to force the American way of life on to a nation that maybe doesn't want it?

SCHAFFER: No. If you think that's true, then why are 70 or 80 percent of the people thrilled to have us there? Have you seen that? And it's not a "regime," by the way. You keep up that kind of language, I'm going to end the interview right now.

BW&BK: Okay. I understand.

SCHAFFER: I'm serious.

Then there's the part where Schaffer responds incredulously to a question about—believe it or not—Noam Chomsky: "Talk about one of the f—n' ultra-leftist spin-doctors of the world, *Noam Chomsky*? You buy into that crap?"

If there's a second Bush administration and the position comes open, THE SCRAPBOOK figures Jon Schaffer would make an excellent ambassador to France. ♦

Oops

THE SCRAPBOOK extends its congratulations—and apologies—to retired Sen. Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio, who is still very much alive, notwithstanding an *en passant* suggestion to the contrary in these pages last week. ♦

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Casual

The Advice Squad

My wife is due to give birth any day now to our first child (thank you, and yes, we are registered) and I would like to take this occasion to make a request of all fathers: Please don't give me any more advice about the first year of the baby's life.

I'm already so terrified by the counsel I've gotten that I have asked the obstetrician to give *me* an epidural so I won't have to think about all the daunting things I've been told about what comes after. Though, come to think of it, an epidural won't help, since it doesn't deaden the feeling in the brain, which is where the warnings have lodged themselves.

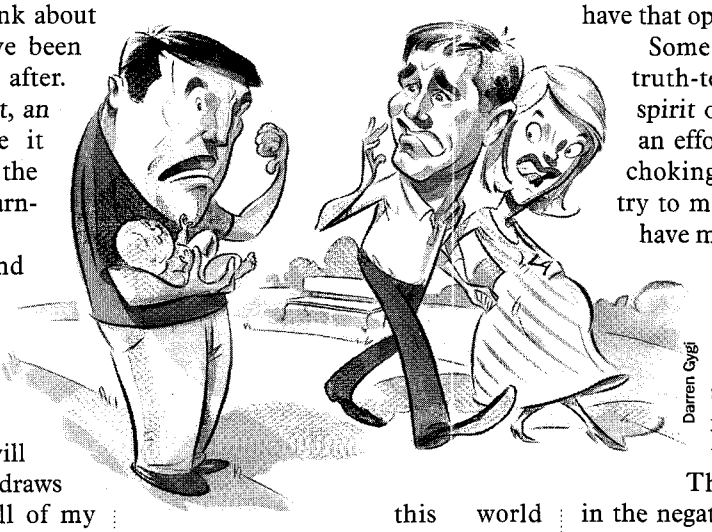
I've been told—again and again and again—that I won't get any sleep for months. I've been told that the baby won't stop crying and I won't know what to do about it. I've been told I will find every moment the baby draws breath will expand the well of my existential worries (Is she breathing? Is she unhappy?) near the breaking point.

I've been told that I will feel helpless because I won't be the primary caregiver or feeder, that hormones might transform my beloved wife into anything from a hateful harridan to a raging psychotic, and that there's nothing I can do about any of it except live through it.

I've been told to go to restaurants and movies and the theater and every other entertainment venue now before it's too late, because once there's a baby, we will never again go anywhere except to a playground, a playgroup, or a playdate.

"I won't lie to you," one friend told me a few weeks ago. "The first three months just *suck*." I should point out that I hadn't actually asked him to proffer his wisdom as the father of a 15-month-old, but I have learned that being in the presence of an impending new father causes even the most reticent of men to soliloquize about paternity.

It was this fellow's view that God had blown it, that the true gestation period of a baby is really 12 months, and that basically, infants come into this world only half-cooked. They don't want to be here, they're not ready to be here, and they punish their parents for forcing them to come out too soon.


Darren Gygi

Interesting theory. Thanks a lot.

After a while, of course, these men will say something like, "It's the best thing in the world, of course, being a father." But that almost seems pro forma, like something they have learned to say. The horror stories emerge unbidden and voluminously, like Old Faithful.

There was a time when I thought I was well prepared for fatherhood. I was an expert babysitter as a teenager and have been very much present in the lives of my 10 nieces and nephews. Of course, there was also a time when I expected to pace in the waiting room with a box of cigars, waiting anxiously for a doctor in operating-room scrubs to emerge from a swinging door to tell me the baby's sex, that the missus was sleeping peacefully, and I could go look at the child through the nursery window.

Then I would go home and try to do some laundry, whereupon I would put too much detergent in the washing machine and cause the house to be flooded by bubbly foam.

Well, we don't live in a house, and we don't have a washing machine, and no sitcom father—for that is where I got my idea of what it's like to have a baby, from situation comedies—ever was given the option of cutting the umbilical cord. (I will have that option. Lucky me.)

Some of this unvarnished truth-telling reflects the new spirit of motherhood advice. In an effort to keep mothers from choking on guilt, advice-givers try to make clear that women *do* have mixed emotions when they have babies, that it's not all sweetness and light and roses and candy.

Lately, however, it seems advice-givers do more than acknowledge the mixed emotions. They seem almost to revel in the negative, to dwell lovingly on every feeling that might be dark and unpleasant—and thereby potentially make such feeling seem more normal than joy and fulfillment.

So perhaps all this trash-talk is yet another example of the feminization of male discourse. But I don't think so. The more I have reflected on it, the more it seems to me that the horror-story fathers sound less like survivors of postpartum depression than exhilarated outdoorsmen, happily comparing the scars and wounds they suffered during grueling physical challenges.

In other words, fatherhood is the newest extreme sport. And the most ancient.

John Podhoretz

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Power and Weakness

William Kristol writes in "Of Mice and Men" (May 24): "We can't win if we don't apply ourselves anew to trying to win." For some reason this simple statement led me to reread Thomas Paine's *The Crisis*. Perhaps it is time for all the "reasonable people" referred to by Kristol, and even those who may be unreasonable, to refamiliarize themselves with the first few sentences of Paine's ringing exhortation to a troubled American populace in late 1776:

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us—that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

The American people and their government must have the perseverance and fortitude not only to lead the battle, but to complete the mission of eradicating terrorism in all its insidious forms. The thought of a defeat in this war must be anathema to all who oppose militant Islam.

Henry Sheffield
Arlington, VA

Trouble Me

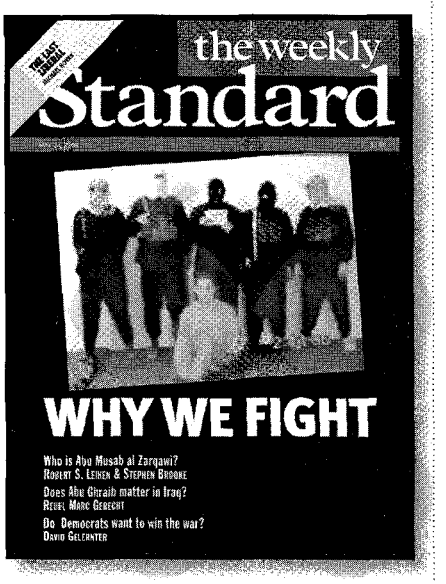
As an American police officer serving in Kosovo, I knew all the Americans involved in the unprovoked attack by the Jordanian U.N. worker that Stephen Schwartz writes about in "The U.N. Brings Trouble to Kosovo" (May 3). They were all my classmates during training in Virgina and Pristina. They were more than just good Americans here on a police mission. They were mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, all here for one reason: to serve the people of a war-torn region. They were my friends.

Schwartz's reporting suggested that there may have been an argument or exchange of words between the Americans and the Jordian SPU officer before the attack occurred. Yet every account I ever heard from those that were present indicates this was not the case. The Jordanian simply walked the bus line, loaded his machine gun, and let his bullets fly.

Thomas Rosemurgy
Pristina, Kosovo

Georgia Peach

In "Georgia on His Mind" (May 24) Richard W. Carlson seriously misleads the readers of The Weekly Standard. Carlson notes he was in Georgia "last month" but fails to mention it was at the invitation and with the full support of Aslan Abashidze, the former strongman of Adjara. Just after the visit, Carlson claims he agreeably peddled Abashidze's story of an alleged



assassination attempt all the way to the White House. On May 6, 2004, Abashidze ended his reign of terror and fled into exile. In the end it was not the delusions of Abashidze that did him in—it was the people of Adjara who had enough of his repression and criminal activity.

Now Carlson has shifted from mouthpiece for a thug to character assassin of a democrat. He misconstrues an interview with President Saakashvili's wife to compare a democratically elected leader to some of the worst criminals of the twentieth century. Clearly he does not like the bonds that democrats from Serbia and other new democracies in Europe have built with their brethren in Georgia—with the help of the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and, yes, the Open Society Institute founded by George Soros. The experiences gained from exposure to these organizations helped to insure our revolution was nonviolent and without bloodshed. Curiously Carlson omits any mention of the pervasive corruption that led President Saakashvili and other Georgian democrats to break with the previous government. He may think corruption is irrelevant, but Georgia's "Rose Revolution" had its roots in the people's anger and disdain over government-sanctioned corruption.

As for the quotes from the "British Helsinki Human Rights Group" included in the article: This is the same organization that compares U.S. military operations in Iraq to Nazi counterinsurgency techniques. They have also railed against NATO enlargement and the so-called military industrial complex for years.

The real story about the new Georgia is that over 75 percent of our new government's ministers were educated in the United States. As a long-term partner of the United States, Georgia just announced a dramatic increase in the number of forces it deploys in Iraq. That is the new Georgia. Whatever Carlson's agenda is, it does not include the promotion of a pro-U.S. democracy in the south Caucasus that is setting an example at home and in the region.

Levan Mikeladze
Ambassador of Georgia
Washington, DC

Richard W. Carlson responds: Levan Mikeladze's angry and befuddled attack underscores my point about the weird aggression of Georgian politics: A few words of criticism might get you a banana-clip from an AK-47 in response. Mikeladze's reckless exaggerations underscore the concept, "Deny everything, make fierce counterallegations," which has become stock phraseology in Georgian diplospeak. The piece made clear that Georgia has a deeply corrupt society, so Mikeladze's saying I think corruption is "irrelevant" is hard to figure.

The real question I addressed, and

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that which the ambassador ignores, is: How powerful in Georgia is George Soros, and what is it that he ultimately wants?

Perhaps he seeks only benign democracy in corrupt, former Communist societies, as he says. Perhaps not. Who can know for sure? Certainly Soros has had a seismic effect on world money markets over the years and now wants to do the same to governments he doesn't like. In the early 1990s he attacked the British pound and left it devalued by 12 percent as he walked off with a personal profit of about $1 billion. He has been accused of similarly destabilizing other world currencies and damaging the economic lives of millions of people. His Open Society Institute is active in dozens of countries and has been forcibly shut down in Yugoslavia, Croatia, and Belarus. However, the Open Society Institute in Tbilisi, Georgia, has been a hive of activity.

The real potential prize in Georgia, a country more impoverished than Haiti, is the Caspian Sea oil pipeline, which will traverse Georgia and end in the port of Batumi, in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara on the Black Sea, seized a few weeks ago by President Saakashvili and his supporters, who successfully drove the elected president of Adjara, Aslan Abashidze, into exile in Russia.

Mikeladze claims I misconstrued statements by Georgian president Saakashvili's wife. But it was Mrs. Saakashvili who, with no explicable prodding, compared her husband to three other "strong" Georgian leaders: the monsters Stalin and Beria, and Gamsakhurdia, who either brought himself to room temperature or had someone else do it for him.

Based on her statements, it is fair to believe that Mrs. Saakashvili may want her husband to follow the Russian ex-KGB tough-guy model, an antidemocratic style of governance Vladimir Putin is making popular in the former Soviet Union. That is, knocking down any opposition, ignoring the rule of law, closing down critical media, having the secret police seize suspects or political annoyances at home in the dark of night, and locking them away for interrogation—all activities Saakashvili now engages in. The fact is that for all his supposed U.S. education—hardly a guarantee of sophistication in my experience—Saakashvili is a rube whose sputtering and spitting domestic rhetoric has little in common with the face he shows to the West, exactly in keeping with the actions of his former mentor Eduard Shevardnadze.

It was Shevardnadze, the former darling of the West, now disparaged as a vicious crook by Mikeladze (and by me, for that matter), who appointed ambassador Mikeladze to his job in Washington, and to whose interests he remained servile until last fall, when Saakashvili, also a Shevardnadze appointee and protégé, stepped in with a snootful of George Soros's money and sent Shevardnadze packing—but not, it is noted, to the prison sentence he so deserved. In fact, the father of the "pervasive corruption" Mikeladze refers to lives comfortably only a few blocks from Saakashvili in Tbilisi.

Love Story

At my advanced age, I thought there was little chance of my falling in love again, but your May 24 issue has me falling head-over-heels in love with The Scrapbook. The entire section that week was perfect: from the item poking fun at Bob Woodward for donating his proceeds from *Jeopardy*'s "Power Players Week" to the Sidwell Friends School, to the item on *New York Times* reporter Fox Butterfield's (mis)use of questionable prison statistics. Bravo!

James G. Baird
Woodstock, GA

Multilateral Man

Mario Loyola writes that in my book *From Empire to Community: A New Approach to International Relations*, I reject "the Bush administration's foreign policy in general." It depends on which year he is talking about (The Standard Reader, May 24).

Recently the Bush administration has embraced a much more multilateral approach (especially in dealing with North Korea and Iran); has become much more eager to have the blessing of the United Nations; has drawn on allies' military forces rather than go it alone; and has learned that "democratizing the Middle East" is a considerable task. My book strongly favors these trends—none of which ties the United States down unduly. And the book salutes President Bush's repeated statements that we are not at war with Islam (and surely not with other civilizations) but with "evildoers" defined as terrorists.

Amitai Etzioni
Washington, DC

Twice the Paine

Bob Kohn's blistering indictment "The Decline and Fall of the *New York Times*" (May 24) made one recall Secretary of State Dean Acheson's outburst half a century ago: "These are the *New York Times* that try men's souls!"

Ernest W. Lefever
Washington, DC

Errata

The price of Scott Stossel's new biography of Sargent Shriver, *Sarge*, is $32.50, not $52.50 as listed in Michael Novak's "The Last Liberal" (May 24).

Also, the full title of Michael Barone's new book, reviewed by Noemie Emery in the May 17 issue, is *Hard America / Soft America: Competition vs. Coddling and the Battle for America's Future*.

• • •

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A NATION AT WAR.2

After freeing Afghanistan from the grip of the Taliban in the fall of 2001, President Bush aimed the war on terror at another threatening regime—the brutal, murderous dictatorship of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. For its scale, speed, and low casualty count, the invasion of Iraq by the United States and 48 other countries numbers among history's spectacular military successes. Coalition troops rolled across Iraq's southern border on March 20, 2003, and three weeks later, Baghdad, the capital, had fallen, with organized resistance reduced to a few scattered pockets. Political prisoners were released, statues and portraits fell, and in December, Hussein himself was dragged out of a squalid, remote hole in the ground, to the cheers and relief of millions of Iraqis.

With the help of the coalition, Iraq is building new political and private-sector institutions as well as its tattered infrastructure. Much of the progress is due to billions of dollars from the United States—the greatest financial commitment of its kind since the Marshall Plan.

On a smaller scale, however, the war on terror continues daily in Iraq, as foreign al Qaeda militants and hardliners of the former regime attack troops, foreign workers, and Iraqi citizens. As President Bush has said, "Now is the time, and Iraq is the place, in which the enemies of the civilized world are testing the will of the civilized world. We must not waver. . . . Our coalition has the means and the will to prevail. We serve the cause of liberty, and that is, always and everywhere, a cause worth serving."

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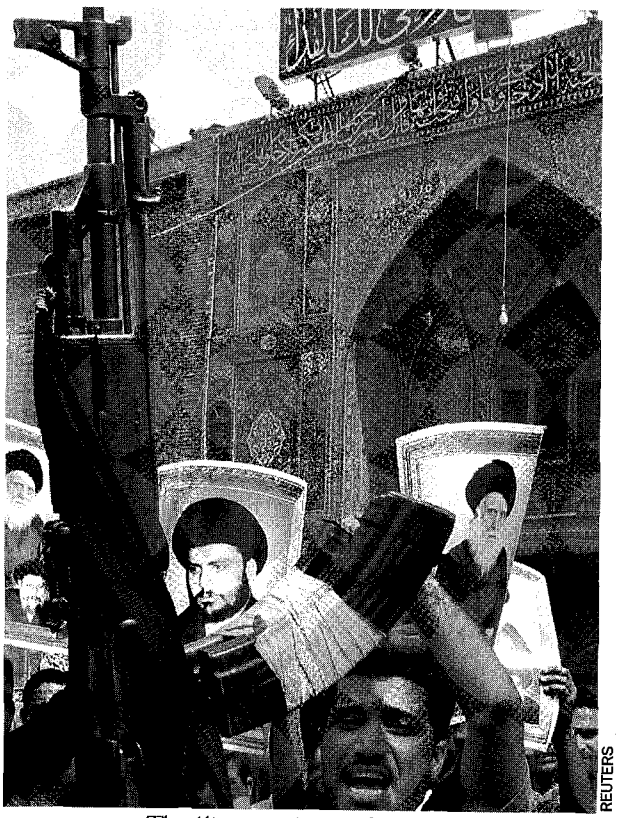
The Caravan Rolls On

The dog barks, but the caravan moves on. This Arab saying has been used privately by Bush administration officials to characterize the progress that continues, despite all difficulties, in Iraq. There's some truth to it. The turnover of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government—a measure of sovereignty at least—will take place on June 30. Iraqi police and civil defense forces will continue to grow. Creation of machinery for a nationwide election next January will proceed. So will construction of a network of modern infrastructure in Iraq, perhaps at a quickened pace.

It's true a dog sometimes bites as well as barks, and serious threats to the birth of a new Iraq remain, especially the climate of terror that prevails over much of the country today. But it's considerably harder to imagine defeat in Iraq and the collapse of progress toward democracy than it is to envision victory and the emergence of an Iraq that holds together. Despite lingering violence, Iraq is more likely than not to muddle through. This won't happen, however, unless America stands firm and doesn't retreat, even slowly, from its promise of a stable democratic Iraq at peace with itself and its neighbors.

President Bush renewed this promise last week in his speech at the Army War College. But elites in America—*especially much of the media and the political class*—have lost faith in the prospect of success in Iraq. This same loss of will occurred after the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in 1968, and it led to American withdrawal and defeat. Now, it's the embarrassment over mistreatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison that's shaken their resolve, though the scandal has scarcely reached beyond one cell block at one of Iraq's other 24 prisons. The result is a wave of irrational defeatism.



REUTERS

The Ali mosque in Najaf, May 27

To share the Iraq-is-lost sentiment, one must ignore a spate of good news. The uprising of Muslim cleric Moktada al-Sadr has fizzled. He negotiated a face-saving compromise that will keep him out of jail for the time being. But his movement failed in two important regards. It didn't ignite a widespread Shia revolt against the American military occupation, and it revealed his Mahdi Army as a paper tiger. American troops will not officially control Najaf, Karbala, and Kufa, the cities Sadr had seized, but they will patrol them and occupy the government buildings. The fate of Sadr, who's been charged with the murder of pro-American Ayatollah Khoei last year, will be left up to Iraqis. This is an imperfect solution, since the Iraqis have been unwilling to arrest Sadr, much less jail or execute him.

The Sadr insurrection also prompted mainstream Shia clerics led by Ayatollah Sistani to speak out. Not only did they ostracize Sadr and tell him to vacate the holy mosque in Najaf, but they also disputed his claim that American soldiers had fired on the mosque. Quite the contrary, they said Sadr himself was responsible for

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damaging the mosque. The White House was understandably thrilled. Sistani, the most powerful religious leader in Iraq, had never before been as active politically. He wanted Sadr sidelined without a huge battle in Najaf that might have transformed Sadr into a national hero. And that's what Sistani helped to achieve.

On two other fronts, the Bush administration seems to be moving in the right direction. The unfortunate retreat from Falluja and the use of former Republican Guard troops to police it won't be a model for other Iraqi cities, senior Bush officials now say. It's a gamble that so far hasn't led to the arrest of any Baathists or terrorists or the relinquishing of any weapons. In any case, American generals who've advocated Falluja as a model need to be told the Bush administration has decided otherwise.

And the proposal that various private militias be deputized for duty as law enforcement officers has also been rejected—and for good reason. Rather than make Iraq safer, it would have made the country subject to warlordism and possibly caused a civil war. Democratic elections—indeed, the creation of a democratic government—would be jeopardized.

Elections will be jeopardized anyway if the dicey security situation in Iraq isn't improved. Sad to say, the Bush administration hasn't done enough to improve it. In his War College speech, Bush cited the "sophisticated terrorist tactics" used by extremists to "sow chaos and seize regional power." But he offered no fresh solution, no new military offensive to crack down on terrorism. The best administration officials could offer is that the deployment of newly trained Iraqi police and civil defense soldiers will make the security problem manageable. We doubt it.

Nor will a United Nations resolution endorsing the interim government help much. It may have been clever to recruit U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to assemble temporary leaders and begin creating an election apparatus. His role will give the new government all the legitimacy it needs. Returning to the Security Council for a new resolution is both unnecessary and risky. No good can come from making the American and British effort in Iraq subject to the whims of the French, Russians, and Chinese. They are already seeking to attach strings that would weaken American influence in Iraq and shackle allied troops.

So our advice is simple. Stay firm in the commitment to democracy. Stick to the plan for sovereignty and elections, preferably moving forward the date of elections. Intensify the fight against terrorists in Iraq. Forget the U.N. Yes, the dog will continue to bark. But the caravan will move on smartly.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

Michael Ramirez

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Getting It Right, Despite Ourselves?

The democratic ethos is still moving forward in Iraq. BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

GIVEN ALL THE CONFUSION and frenetic American behavior surrounding the June 30 transfer of sovereignty in Iraq, it is hard not to believe that the Bush administration is winging it day by day. At one moment, the U.N. envoy to Iraq, former Algerian foreign minister Lakhdar Brahimi, is following Senator John Kerry's advice and assuming responsibility and authority for America's fate in Mesopotamia. The next, Ambassador Robert Blackwill, the National Security Council's man on Iraq, is flying off to Baghdad to supervise Brahimi, a Sunni pan-Arab bureaucrat turned U.N. democrat. It's all right for American officials desperate to propitiate Sunni-led violence in Iraq to talk about overzealous de-Baathification under the American proconsul L. Paul Bremer. It's much scarier to hear Brahimi, who apparently shed not a tear and said not a word about Saddam Hussein's post-Gulf War slaughter of the Shiites and Kurds, criticize "excessive" de-Baathification.

Brahimi's haughty and prevaricating disposition was on display on ABC's *This Week* in late April when he reacted to George Stephanopoulos's query about his appropriateness for dealing with Iraq's Shiites. "You know, I don't know how to answer . . . because, you know, [it] doesn't come into my thinking that I am, I am Sunni," responded Brahimi. "I am a U.N. man. I am definitely a Muslim, and I come from a country where, you know, there are no, there are no problems of Sunni and Shia, so I really don't know. I don't think the Iranians had any problems with me in Afghanistan. Nor did the Shia. . . . They didn't have any problem with me, so I think, frankly, I think it's silly to suggest that I may have a problem because I am Sunni, that I would favor the Sunnis against the Shiites. Why should I do that?"

Brahimi is right: In Algeria there is no Shiite problem since you can count the country's Shiites on your hands and toes. Algeria is a thoroughly Sunni country. Brahimi knew this; Stephanopoulos did not. The Sunni consciousness is actually one of the things that rarely evaporates even among the most Westernized Sunni Arabs. Often the pan-Arabist I-don't-go-to-the-mosque-but-I'm-a-Muslim crowd, from which Brahimi springs, are the most disdainful, since Shiites have often been more reluctant to abandon their atavistic and parochial affections and faith.

Antipathy for Shiites, be they Persian or Arab, comes with mother's milk in the Sunni Arab world. In all probability, Brahimi is being disingenuous when he depicts himself as just a Muslim, free of the society that produced him. He should certainly be applauded for his arduous work in Afghanistan, but Afghanistan in the Arab Middle East doesn't count. Compare the very timid Arab outrage over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—the Algerian elite were noteworthy in praising the Soviets' *mission civilisatrice*—with Arab anger over the Anglo-American invasion of Saddam's Iraq. Advancing a Shiite-led democracy in Mesopotamia has serious repercussions for Brahimi's friends and kith and kin; any actions on behalf of Afghanistan's Shiite Hazara are esoteric and irrelevant west of Iran.

One could feel a lot less uneasy about Brahimi's commitment to democracy in the Arab world—and the Bush administration's decision to "internationalize" Iraq through him and the United Nations—if one could find anywhere his public reflection on the Algerian military regime's brutality in crushing the Islamist rebellion after Algeria's generals cancelled elections in 1991. The savagery of the regime probably equaled the viciousness of the most extreme Islamists. Yet neither in defense nor in reproach can you find Brahimi ruminating on democracy in his homeland—a country that, for better and worse, has been an Arab laboratory for representative and repressive government.

The haphazardness and oddness of the trio Brahimi, Blackwill, and Bremer together planning the fate of the Bush administration and the United States in Iraq is less unsettling, however, than listening to Secretary of State Colin Powell ruminate on what "full sovereignty" for Iraqis means after June 30.

On May 14, Secretary Powell suggested that the unelected interim government would have the right to ask for an American withdrawal from Iraq. According to senior officials, he made this statement before a consensus had been reached within the administration on the issue of what exactly "full sovereignty" denotes. However, the British government obviously followed Secretary Powell's line of reasoning, which mirrors the thinking in Paris and Berlin, and logically concluded that if the Americans were granting the right of ejection to an unelected interim government, then they must also be granting to it the right of veto over American and allied military operations. In serious difficulty with his own Labour party and disinclined now to stray too far from the common European view of Iraq as a

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mess, Prime Minister Tony Blair moves ever closer to Paris and Berlin, which want to see June 30 as a clean break with the past.

The Bush administration will now have none of this philosophical clarity, of course. Common sense, however muddled, intervenes. The fight at Falluja certainly revealed that any serious counterinsurgency campaign in the Sunni Triangle could be checkmated by protesting Iraqi Sunnis, not to mention the indispensable Brahimi, who found the Marine Corps actions in Falluja morally unacceptable. (The *Atlantic Monthly*'s Robert Kaplan has pointed out from the battlefield that Washington managed to pull a cease-fire from the jaws of victory in Falluja.) Secretary Powell and other U.S. officials are now suggesting—though not asserting—that Washington will retain control over U.S. military operations.

"The president never, never relinquishes command of American troops," said Powell on May 26. "He can allow them to work with somebody else and they will take instructions from that somebody else and try to accommodate that somebody else, but never do you yield command authority or total sovereignty over American troops to any other sovereign." Anticipating the United States and an interim Iraqi government occasionally being at cross-purposes, the secretary further remarked, "I don't expect this to be a problem because we've been in situations like this on and off for 50 years—Korea, Germany, France, Belgium—everywhere we have troops."

Secretary Powell understandably wants to provide wiggle room for the United States to press, cajole, and align good Iraqis against bad ones without having to state explicitly—or have a United Nations resolution declare clearly—that the United States would be subject to a de facto minority Sunni veto over U.S. military action. (It is worthwhile to remember that the senior Shiite clerics of Najaf did not find the Marines at Falluja to be engaged in unacceptable behavior. They knew, even if the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* did not, that an anti-American Shiite-Sunni entente was not in the offing at Falluja.)

But such common sense in Iraq is a very dicey proposition for the Bush administration. It is apples and oranges to compare America's presence in Western European countries we liberated from Nazism and protected against Soviet communism, or America's presence in South Korea where we stave off an invasion of totalitarianism, or in Uzbekistan where we lend legitimacy and power to a local dictator, with America's presence in post-Saddam Iraq. The modern history and culture of all concerned is completely different.

It is the Americans, much more than the Iraqis, who locked onto the idea of transferring sovereignty before democracy took its course.

Arab Muslim lands are vastly more sensitive to the presence of Western forces (Christian or Jewish) in their midst. Even among Iraq's Shiites, who are almost uniformly thankful that George W. Bush saved them from Saddam Hussein, nationalist and Islamic sensibility makes it enormously difficult for them to align themselves publicly with American actions. They can do so with great sincerity privately. They can do so publicly through their silence and their unwillingness to aid anti-American Iraqis (this is the tried-and-true approach of most Shiite clerics). But publicly to stand up and say—especially if these are unelected Iraqis whose authority is delegated to them by Brahimi, Blackwill, and Bremer—that they aren't yet in favor of "full sovereignty," that they need Americans or the NATO alliance to protect them, is to ask Iraqi Shiites to swallow huge gulps of pride. They might do it. But this is a real crapshoot.

Which may be a major reason why Grand Ayatollah Sistani has spoken vastly more about elections than about delegated sovereignty. Sovereignty not backed by elections can't be "full." Arab Shiites, Arab Sunnis, and Kurds won't really know who they are, what their relationship is with each other, and what their relationship will be with foreigners until elections allow them to stand on their own feet. It is the Americans, much more than the Iraqis and especially the Iraqi Shia, who locked onto the idea of transferring sovereignty before democracy took its course. For a variety of reasons—some good, most bad—the Americans have been scared of elections in Iraq.

So we now have to cross our fingers and hope that Sistani and the clerics of Najaf will continue to hold the Shiite center even though elections still seem as far away with the United Nations involved as they did when Ambassador Bremer was calling the shots. We have to gamble that if the senior Shiite clergy decides to object to significant aspects of the appointed transitional government, they will do so in a way that allows the overall process to continue peacefully.

The amazing public statement issued in late May by the senior clerics of Najaf, collectively known as the Hawza, against the young clerical insurrectionist Moktada al-Sadr and his Lebanese supporter, the general secretary of Hezbollah, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, ought to fill one with hope that Sistani has not yet given up on the American promise of democratic elections. If the elections are fair, they will finally give the Shiites the stake in Iraqi society that the British denied them 80 years ago. The Hawza's statement identifies Sadr and his *Sadriyyin*, not the Americans, as those who first violated the Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf. The Shiite clergy obviously has not lost its balance and is even willing

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publicly to reprimand severely one of its own.

Given Sistani's boldness, having Brahimi and the United Nations center stage in Iraq probably won't hurt us. Neither probably will the common sense of Colin Powell. Nor the too distant date (January 2005) for the first round of national elections. Nor the possible selection of Iyad Allawi as Iraq's first unelected, transitional prime minister.

Allawi is a Shiite member of the Iraqi Governing Council and the former leader of the Iraqi National Accord, the CIA's favorite exile group, which had a very clubby propensity for former Baathist military officers. Anyone who has had dealings with the Accord knows that the organization has not been blessed by Langley with influence and lots of cash because the Directorate of Operations views Allawi or his group as a bastion of democratic zeal. But if the Governing Council, with a majority of Shiite members present, actually chose him, then he unquestionably carries Sistani's approval—as odd as it seems, since Allawi has had an awful reputation among senior Shiite clerics. As a Shiite the Sunnis could like, Allawi may be acceptable to Brahimi.

If Sistani is in fact behind Allawi, then Brahimi's objections won't matter. Neither will the criticisms of those in Washington who sensibly question Allawi's past and probably present predilections. The democratic ethos in Iraq, fortified much more by the Iraqi Shiite clergy than the Coalition Provisional Authority, is still moving forward. It would be a good idea, however, lest Secretary Powell's common sense start to fail, for the Bush administration to defy the elections experts in the U.S. government and the United Nations who think January 2005 is too soon for a "proper" contest and advance the date for the first elections. Only democracy will allow the Americans and the Iraqis to escape the violence that is the legacy of Saddam Hussein and the Sunni Arab dictators and kings who preceded him. ♦

The Army of the Euphrates

General Casey at the bat.

BY TOM DONNELLY

IF YOU WANTED TO, you could easily make the case that America is retreating in Iraq. Under relentless attack in the press, with a nasty campaign fight on its hands, the Bush administration has moved from its natural defensive crouch to a position that at times looks fetal. The president's stout rhetoric in his speech at the Army War College was belied by a lack of initiatives for going on offense. It is difficult to distinguish "stay the course" from "more of the same."

Yet buried in last week's news was one item that might be indicative of new thinking on Iraq: the pending appointment of Gen. George W. Casey Jr., now vice chief of staff of the army, to a new position as senior military commander in Iraq. While questions remain about the chain of command, placing a four-star general with Washington experience in charge of military operations in Iraq is an overdue move. In essence, Casey could become the first commander of the Army of the Euphrates.

If so, that would be a crucial step toward institutionalizing a strategic partnership with Iraq that will extend well beyond the formal end of occupation on June 30. In particular it may signal recognition in Washington that creating a secure environment for the experiment in Iraqi democracy is a long-term task. There can be no exit strategy.

Casey's appointment is also a sign that the scope of the American military commitment in Iraq surpasses what an expeditionary, temporary headquarters—a "combined joint task force" or "CJTF"—is capable of doing. Indeed, the story of CJTF-7 in Iraq over the last year is a case study in the limitations of this concept. The headquarters has been chronically undermanned; it is not structured to handle the myriad problems of occupation and reconstruction and is bureaucratically overwhelmed when in contact with the permanent government of the Pentagon. These are headquarters designed for rapid deployment, not for wars of attrition with accountants in Washington.

In contrast to the current senior commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, Casey is well suited for this sort of command. As head of CJTF-7, Sanchez has really functioned as a glorified corps commander—what Army doctrine would call a commander at the "operational" level of war. What is needed, and what Casey can bring to the job, is engagement at the strategic level.

Casey has credibility with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld—something few senior soldiers can claim. As vice chief of staff, Casey has experience working with new Army chief Gen. Peter Schoomaker, a career special operations officer brought out of retirement to meet Rumsfeld's demand for change in the Army. Casey also directed the Joint Staff under current JCS chairman Gen. Richard Myers.

At the same time, Casey has a deep appreciation of the Army as an institution—he has credibility with an officer corps and a service suffering the unhappy consequences of Rumsfeld's misjudgments about postwar Iraq. He was assistant division com-

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mander of the 1st Armored Division in Bosnia, with a firsthand appreciation of the challenges of "nation-building" missions. In sum, Casey is well suited by experience and temperament to address the requirements for a long-term U.S. military presence.

What is less clear is the chain of command that will govern this new arrangement. Will Casey simply report to Gen. John Abizaid, head of Central Command, or will he be able, like the commander of U.S. forces in Korea, to report straight to Washington? Pentagon insiders give Abizaid high marks for granting his subordinates in Iraq the discretion essential for seizing the initiative in wartime, and for concentrating his efforts on Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and other CENTCOM operations. The new structure should enshrine this division of labor: The war in Iraq is more than important enough to allow for such a "sub-unified" command.

Of course, even if the military command structure works out, it's far from clear how U.S. forces will work with their civilian partners in Iraq—the transitional Iraqi government, the elected government in 2005, or, for that matter, with John Negroponte, due to become the first U.S. ambassador to the new Iraq. Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority, for a variety of reasons, have had increasingly rotten relations with the U.S. military; this needs to be fixed. Alas, a good part of this problem originates in Washington and results from the unresolved fight over basic Iraq policy that has plagued the administration since before the war and can only be fixed by the White House.

No organizational wiring diagram and no single general, no matter how talented, will solve all our problems in Iraq. No one should expect Gen. Casey to lead us to victory single-handed—that's the job of the commander in chief. But if we're not going to cut and run, a necessary step is putting someone very much like him in command. ♦

The Rise of Zarqawi

Is he the next bin Laden?

BY STEVEN BROOKE

SINCE COLIN POWELL first brought Abu Musab al Zarqawi to the world's attention as "an associate and collaborator" of Osama bin Laden in February 2003, we have witnessed firsthand his rapid rise to the top of the terrorist heap. He has left his mark on attacks around the world, from Iraq to Turkey to Spain. The escalation of Zarqawi's profile and rhetoric may mean he is mounting a challenge to bin Laden's leadership of the global jihad.

In some respects Zarqawi's development as a holy warrior parallels bin Laden's. He fought the Soviets in Afghanistan, associated with a wide variety of terrorist groups, and ran his own network of training camps in Afghanistan. He even has a hard-core terrorist and ideologue, Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, as a top lieutenant, echoing the relationship between bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri.

But despite these similarities Zarqawi has taken pains to distinguish himself from al Qaeda. Zarqawi never pledged the *bayat*, the oath of allegiance, to bin Laden. He has links to at least three terrorist groups and runs his own, *Attawhid Wal Jihad* (Unity and Jihad), or simply *al Tawhid*. Shadi Abdallah, a Jordanian terrorist imprisoned in Germany, told his German interrogators in 2002 that Zarqawi was "against al Qaeda."

The main disagreement between bin Laden and Zarqawi seems to be over strategy. While al Qaeda targets the "far enemy," the United States, Zarqawi focuses his rage on "near enemies" such as Syria, Jordan, and Israel. Zarqawi's choice is not just strategic; it is personal. A Jordanian of Palestinian heritage, he spent seven years in a Jordanian prison he describes as the "Arabs' Guantanamo" for plotting to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy.

But Iraq has become the central theater for Zarqawi's development as a terrorist. In January 2004 Iraqi Kurds captured a letter from Zarqawi to bin Laden proposing closer ties between their organizations. Zarqawi offered bin Laden a chance to join him in the gathering jihad, attaining victory through a sectarian war, by "drag[ging] the Shia into the battle."

Bin Laden appears to have rejected Zarqawi's petition, possibly because of a disagreement over the efficacy of targeting a "near enemy," or perhaps over the wisdom of targeting the Shia and provoking an Islamic civil war. Bin Laden favors tactical cooperation with Shia militant groups while Zarqawi's wrath towards the Shia, whose "damage is worse and more destructive to the [Islamic] nation than the Americans," is extreme.

To Zarqawi, waging (and winning) a jihad in Iraq is central because "if jihad fails in Iraq, the [Muslim] nation will never rise again." This adamantine belief in the necessity of victory in Iraq, coupled with a lack of action on bin Laden's part, seems to have spurred Zarqawi's bid for preeminence.

In his letter to bin Laden, Zarqawi hinted that he might seek a higher profile if rebuffed. "What has prevented us from going public," he wrote, "is that we have been waiting until we have weight on the ground and finish preparing integrated struc-

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tures capable of bearing the consequences of going public." By April, Zarqawi was claiming post facto credit for a laundry list of attacks: "We have cut off their head and ripped their bodies in many areas; the United Nations in Baghdad, coalition forces in Karbala, the Italians in Nasiriyah, the American forces on the Khalidiyyah Bridge, American intelligence in Al-Shaheen Hotel, the CIA in Al-Rashid Hotel and the Polish forces in Al-Hillah."

When a massive plot to murder as many as 80,000 people with poison gas was foiled in Jordan this past April, officials quickly and publicly fingered Zarqawi. Zarqawi shot back with a communiqué of his own a few days later stating: "Yes our plan was to destroy the Intelligence System completely." But "the claim of the chemical bomb that would kill thousands is absolutely a lie." He followed this up at the end of April with a statement claiming responsibility for an April 24 suicide boat attack on a Basra terminal that killed three sailors. On May 2 he issued a communiqué claiming two suicide attacks the week before. May 6 saw another claim, this time for a devastating car bomb in central Baghdad. On May 17 Zarqawi claimed credit for the assassination of Ezzedine Salim, a Shia member of the Iraqi Governing Council. For someone who used to be known for never claiming his attacks, this turnaround is conspicuous.

As Zarqawi has begun to trumpet his attacks, his rhetoric has also become inspirational, aiming to mobilize Muslims to rally behind his group, which he sees as "the spearhead, the enabling vanguard, and the bridge on which the [Islamic] nation crosses over to the victory that is promised and the tomorrow to which we aspire." His appeal for recruits has increasingly lost subtlety. In his statement before he decapitated Nicholas Berg, a Jewish-American contractor, Zarqawi vents: "Is there any excuse left to sit idly by? How can a free Muslim sleep soundly while Islam is being slaughtered, its honor bleeding?" His communiqué claiming the May 6 car bomb attack was even more explicit: "As we bless this operation . . . we call upon the Muslim youth everywhere to carry on and follow this path of glory, pride, dignity, heroism, manliness, jihad, and martyrdom." Zarqawi claimed that the assassination of the head of the Iraqi Governing Council "announces to Muslims everywhere that the mujahedeen, with their people in Iraq, are continuing and determined to lift the humiliation from our nation."

In addition to attracting the attention of U.S. authorities, who are considering raising the reward for Zarqawi from $10 million to $25 million, (equal to bin Laden himself), Zarqawi's efforts are beginning to draw notice among the universe of Sunni militants. Last month the cell leader of the plot to detonate chemical weapons in Jordan admitted that he had "pledged allegiance to Abu Musab al Zarqawi." The SITE Institute, a counterterrorism research group in Washington, uncovered a declaration of unification between Zarqawi's Attawhid Wal Jihad group and an Iraqi militant band, the Salafist Mujahid Group. The two groups issued a joint statement in which they claimed: "the heroes of the Mujahid Salafist Jamaa [group] and their brothers in Attawhid Wal Jihad convened and embraced their hearts and souls, cordially united their ranks, and acknowledged Abu Musab al Zarqawi as their leader, under the group of Attawhid Wal Jihad." (Translations of several recent Zarqawi communiqués can be found at *www.siteinstitute.org*.)

In the formative years of al Qaeda, groups and militants flocked to bin Laden because they were inspired by his actions and rhetoric. Now Zarqawi is drawing militants from around the world by offering an alternative to al Qaeda. In many respects this is typical of revolutionary organizations, which fracture as they mature. But it remains to be seen how bin Laden will deal with this motivated and capable challenger. ♦

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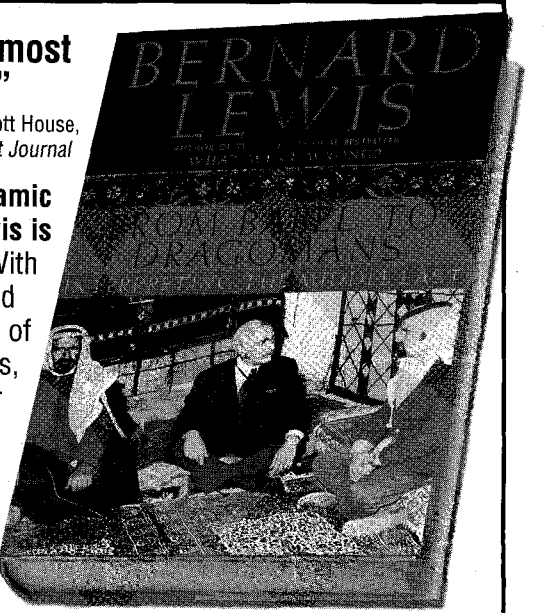

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Melvin J. Lasky, 1920-2004

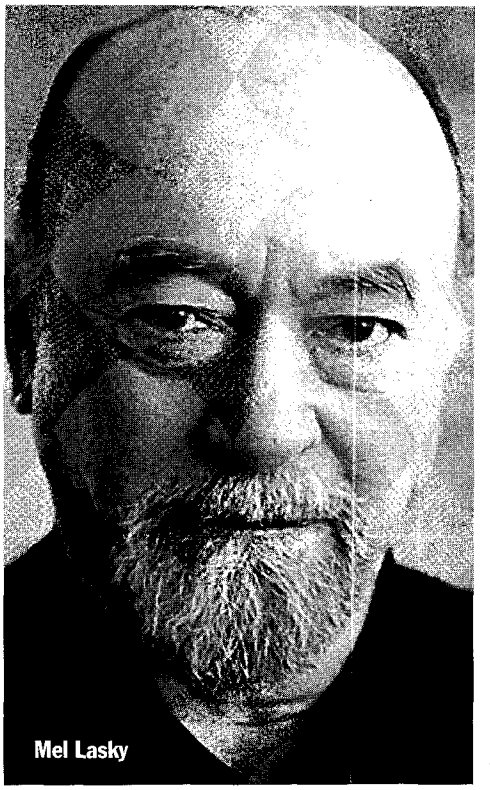
It was no accident that he was a great editor.

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

IN HIS POEM "Esthétique du Mal," Wallace Stevens speaks of "the lunatic of one idea." Melvin J. Lasky might be thought such a person. He had the energy of a lunatic, and, though widely read and interested in everything, he could nonetheless be described a "one idea" man.

That idea, however, was the most significant political idea of the 20th century: Antitotalitarianism was its name—and far from being the idea of a lunatic, it was absolutely crucial to any claim of political integrity in what now appears, in sheer number of people murdered for political reasons, the cruelest of all centuries in history. Melvin Lasky, who died on May 19 at age 84, devoted his life to the antitotalitarian idea and contributed heavily, on the intellectual front, to the defeat of communism in his lifetime.

Born in the Bronx in 1920, Mel Lasky grew up in an intensely political milieu. He went to City College, and was of the generation there of Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, Irving Kristol, and other young men who cut their Marxistical distinctions finer than they cut the belly lox at Ratner's old Lower East Side restaurant. Unlike these others, Lasky longed for Europe, and would soon become one of those mid-Atlantic men: Americans most at home in Europe, and Europeans most at home in America. After serving in World War II, he stayed on in Germany to edit the magazine *Der Monat*, to which he brought such continental writers as Arthur Koestler, Raymond Aron, Bertrand Russell, and Ignazio Silone. The Swiss writer François Bondy wrote of Mel's German editorship that "a young American gave several generations of Europeans not only a literary platform but something like a common intellectual homeland."



Mel Lasky

Mel Lasky acquired wider fame as the second American editor of *Encounter* (the first was Irving Kristol). He edited it with panache, and, while drawing on the best English writers, enriched it with his many continental connections. He was editor when it was revealed that *Encounter* was partly financed, through splendidly labyrinthine ways, by the Central Intelligence Agency, which caused a great intellectual scandal in its day. Not everyone was scandalized; and I myself have long viewed the CIA's helping to underwrite this perhaps best of 20th-century magazines as one of its solidest achievements.

I knew Mel Lasky through Edward Shils, who was an occasional contributor and full-time though usually ignored adviser to Mel during his *Encounter* days. In a letter, Edward described Mel to me as "awful, remarkable, and admirable." The "awful" referred to Mel's more flamboyant side; he had the dramatizing imagination of a boy who grew up on revolutionary fantasies. He frequently availed himself of such Trotskyist phrases as "hoist on his own petard" (I like the phrase better with "petard" replaced by "foulard"), "crossing polemical swords," and "it is no accident that," even inserting them into other people's articles. He was also a nearly nonstop talker, even at transcontinental telephone rates, but the talk was high quality and I enjoyed it.

Mel was small, wiry, bald, and wore a Lenin-like goatee. At one point during the 1970s, he added long thick sideburns, causing Shils to say to him, "Now, Melvin, you can be either Lenin or Brahms, but I will not permit you to be both simultaneously." More likely, Mel thought himself the 20th-century Alexander Herzen, a man inspired by the socialist impulse but very wise about all the ways that utopian dreams go astray. Lasky's most ambitious book is *Utopia and Revolution*.

"A Farewell to Utopia" is the title that Mel gave to an essay I sent to him about my own mildly radical youth. I had published earlier pieces in *Encounter* in response to his red ballpoint scrawled notes asking me for contributions. Because *Encounter* was often in financial trouble, the checks for payment were frequently very late arriving. Because this particular essay

Joseph Epstein is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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had been commissioned as part of a book, for which I received a good fee, I instructed Mel that he need not pay me for it out of *Encounter* funds. Naturally, a check arrived straightaway. Perfect Mel. "Melvin is like a dog who knows seven languages," Edward Shils used to say about him, "and obeys in none."

Although he published a number of books, Mel Lasky was foremost an editor, a man who finds things for other people to write. Like all superior editors, he had an instinctual sense, in the realm of intellectual life, of the fashionable and the enduring and the right balance between the two. *Encounter* always had a firm line on totalitarian communism, but, owing to the breadth of Mel's interests, there was generally a great deal else in the magazine for curious readers. He was himself such a reader, and a compulsive clipper of articles from journals and papers around the world. One of the changes he made over his predecessor's *Encounter* was to add little boxes of material from the world press, so that the magazine's pages sometimes seemed the intellectual equivalent of a collage.

When financial troubles finally drove *Encounter* under, Mel Lasky was, for the first time in his adult life, without a magazine. You have to imagine Roy Rogers without his horse, Frank Sinatra without a microphone, Rita Hayworth in flats. Unthinkable, really.

He lived his last years in Berlin, where he wrote the first of a projected three-volume study on *The Language of Journalism*. He continued clipping stray articles, and his last scrawled note to me contained a clipping from the English press on goofy new usage, which he thought I might enjoy. He asked that I send him some news, by which of course he meant gossip about intellectual life in America. I sent him what little I had, and told him how much I missed *Encounter*, which I did and still do. The magazine was passionate, turbulent, overflowing with items of oddity and interest, done with genuine flair—like Melvin J. Lasky himself. ♦

Can de Villepin Change His Spots?

France's surprising new hard-liner.

BY MICHEL GURFINKIEL

Paris

DOMINIQUE DE VILLEPIN offers remarkable—and unexpected—evidence that leopards *can* change their spots. Last year, as foreign minister of France, he torpedoed U.N. support for the war in Iraq. Today, as France's minister of the interior, he has transformed himself into a hardliner in the war on terror.

The new Villepin emerged on April 21, when Abdelkader Bouziane, an Algerian fundamentalist imam of a mosque at Vénissieux, near Lyon, was deported to his native country, without benefit of a trial. The expulsion order had been signed two months earlier, on February 26, by the previous minister of the interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, but not put into effect. Sarkozy and the entire French cabinet were busy with the regional elections, which took place on March 21 and March 28 and ended in disaster for Jacques Chirac's conservative party.

On March 31, Sarkozy, seen as the least politically damaged senior minister, was moved to the finance ministry, while Villepin, a staunch Chirac loyalist, took over at interior. Villepin was under no obligation to heed his predecessor's decisions. Still, he saw to it that Bouziane's deportation was carried out. The Vénissieux imam was well-known among Lyon-area Muslims as a polygamist, a theorist of women's God-ordained inferiority, and an advocate of the Sharia-sanctioned right of husbands to strike "rebellious wives." He had been explicit about this in an interview with *Lyon Mag*, a local monthly. Moreover, Renseignements Généraux, France's domestic intelligence agency, had determined that he was preaching rebellion against the government of France and racial hatred towards non-Muslims in general and Jews in particular. Still, Villepin, like Sarkozy, could have postponed the expulsion. He chose not to.

As it happens, Bouziane's deportation was rescinded by the Lyon administrative court just days later, which ruled that such summary deportations should be restricted to cases of clear and imminent danger (he returned to France on May 22). The ministry insists the danger is real, but has declined to produce evidence, saying it would compromise sources. On the other hand, the court agreed that expulsion could not be ruled out in principle, since Bouziane, as a foreign clergyman, is not allowed to challenge France's constitutional order, including women's rights. A final ruling is scheduled for early June at the latest.

Again, Villepin could have passively heeded the court. Instead, he appealed the decision. He warned the National Assembly on April 28 that, were courts to undermine the government's policies against terrorism on purely procedural niceties, the government would consider changing the law: "A new balance must be found between respect for the law and the imperatives of security." And, as if to drive this point home, on May 1 he ordered the arrest and deportation of another foreign imam, Midhat Güler, who leads a radical Turkish mosque in Paris's 11th arrondissement.

There are several plausible expla-

Michel Gurfinkiel is editor in chief of Valeurs Actuelles, *a Paris-based journal.*

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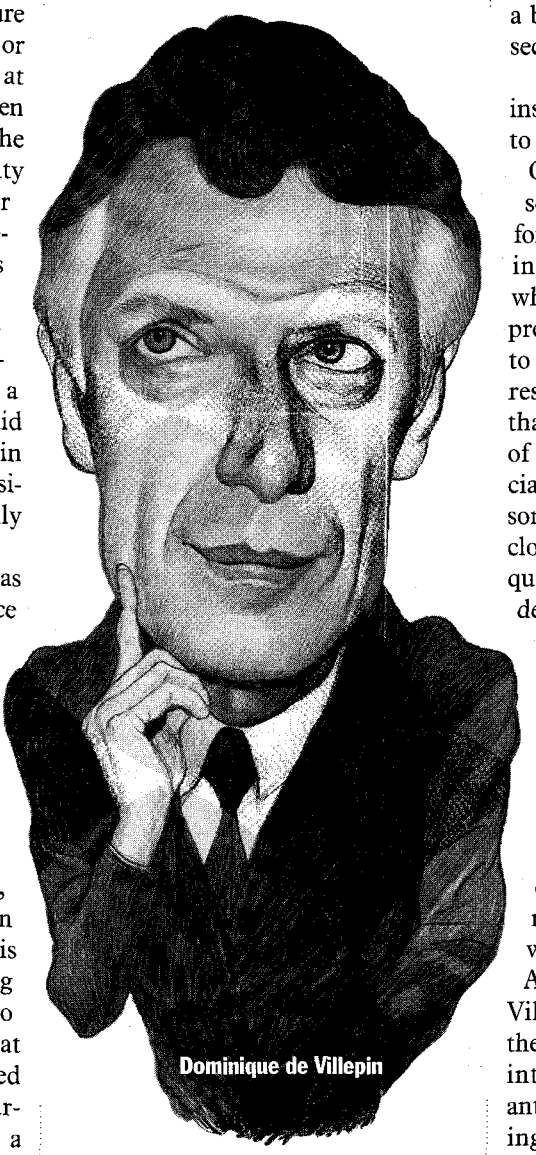
nations for Villepin's makeover. First is the simple fact that ministers are run by their ministries, rather than the other way around. Any government department is a world unto itself, with its own culture and folkways; in order to be successful, the politician who happens to be put in charge is well advised to listen to the civil-service professionals who are ostensibly his subordinates.

At the foreign ministry, the culture is anti-American: Villepin, who may or may not be rabidly anti-American at heart, was happy to play the part when he was boss there. The culture of the interior ministry is hyper-security conscious. The right move for Villepin, again, is to conform. Especially if he wants not just to be as successful as Sarkozy but to outshine him in the event they face off as conservative contenders for the presidency in 2007. If "Paris is worth a mass," as the Protestant Henry IV said when he converted to Catholicism in order to assume the throne, the presidency of modern France is certainly worth a political change of heart.

What is more, internal security has been an urgent issue in France since long before 9/11. Paris was one of the first Western capitals exposed to Middle Eastern terrorism, with the rue Copernic and rue des Rosiers anti-Jewish attacks of 1980 and 1982, and the 1986 bombings on rue Marbeuf and rue de Rennes. There was a second round of terrorism in 1994 and 1995, when groups linked to the Algerian Islamist networks attacked the Paris metro on three occasions—killing and maiming dozens, attempted to blow up the high-speed train that connects Paris to Lyon, and hijacked an airplane from Algeria to Marseilles, possibly in order to launch a suicide attack on some major Paris monument.

The terrorist pressure has never really subsided. Numerous synagogues and Jewish schools have been burned in arson attacks in Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles in the last four years. French military personnel in Pakistan were singled out in a suicide attack in 2002, in retaliation for France's participation in the U.S.-led, anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan. More threats have been heard in recent months, since the French parliament passed a law barring the Islamic veil, as well as other religious symbols (yarmulkes, crosses) at schools and other public places. And of course, there is the perennial concern over homegrown, separatist terror groups, whether Corsican, Basque, or even Breton. In 1998, Corsican terrorists were well organized and brazen enough to kill the government's highest-ranking administrator on the island, Prefect Claude Erignac.


Dominique de Villepin

Whatever the political response to terror over the years—sometimes forceful but quite often cautious or even passive—the French security agencies, including Renseignements Généraux, Police Judiciaire (the ordinary criminal police), the DNAT (a national antiterrorist task force), and the DST (domestic security), have opted for toughness and have been supported by like-minded investigative judges. Arguably, they have done a better job than most other Western security forces.

In the aftermath of 9/11, for instance, the French police were able to round up overnight almost all al Qaeda sympathizers in the country, something few other Western police forces could do at the time. Efficiency in these matters, in France as elsewhere, means not being paralyzed by pressure from the courts, which tend to be more liberal-minded. And resisting such pressure, more often than not, means getting the backing of the minister of the interior, especially in cases like Bouziane's, where some vital information cannot be disclosed. Villepin seems to have learned quickly that he had to deliver, and to deliver quickly, in order to be as popular as Sarkozy.

The other factor pushing Villepin towards toughness might be termed continental peer pressure. Germany is the one country in Europe that Villepin cultivated throughout his tenure as foreign minister. Last year, his German counterpart was the Green foreign minister Joschka Fischer, who was willing to side with France against America, at least for a while. Today Villepin must deal with Otto Schily, the Social Democratic minister of the interior, who is, to say the least, an antiterrorist hawk. And Schily is facing disputes very similar to the Bouziane case: A German court resolved on appeal to free two Moroccan Islamists sentenced by another court as full-fledged accomplices in the 9/11 operations, Mounir al-Motassadeq and Abdelghani Mzoudi, some of the evidence having been withheld at the request of the U.S. government. On April 26, Schily spoke his mind in

Illustration by Earl Keleny

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an interview with *Der Spiegel*, the nation's largest and most influential weekly. He said bluntly that "terrorists who love death can get their wish" and that laws that did not allow for swift and efficient security measures would have to be changed. The parallel with Villepin's own words at the National Assembly two days later is striking. A further sign of a French-German meeting of minds is the extradition from Germany to France, on May 18, of Lionel Dumont, a French gangster who converted to Islam and is seen as one of the most dangerous jihad organizers in Europe and the Far East.

Schily, as it happens, is also a close ally of Attorney General John Ashcroft in the fight against terror. It is conceivable, then, that Dominique de Villepin—as responsible as any man for sundering U.S.-European cooperation in Iraq—could end up an enthusiastic partner in a vibrant international antiterror coalition. Stranger political transformations have no doubt taken place in our time, but it's hard to think of any. ♦

Money Can't Buy You Safety

The pitfalls of the homeland security shopping spree. BY ELI LEHRER

FROM MASSACHUSETTS mill towns to Southern California suburbs, local police, fire, and emergency management agencies are using a cascade of new federal homeland security grants to go shopping. They've bought some $6 billion worth of chemical weapons suits, emergency command centers, laser-assisted crime-scene-reconstruction devices, and other gadgets and gizmos purporting to help fight terrorism. But for all the new "boots and suits," the people who lead America's public safety agencies aren't satisfied. Through organizations ranging from the U.S. Conference of Mayors to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, they complain bitterly about the Bush administration's state and local homeland security policies. And with reason.

The Department of Homeland Security, they say, is both too centralized and not centralized enough: It funds wish lists but provides little strategic guidance. It devolves powers to the states that belong at the federal level, while ignoring the on-the-ground concerns of local police and fire agencies.

New York City is a case in point. Although it has received at least $200 million in grants to buy hardware, and the police and fire departments have redeployed personnel and remade command structures, the Big Apple might have difficulty responding to a second major terrorist attack. The 9/11 commission was right when it observed in May that serious coordination problems hampered the evacuation of the Twin Towers. But three years later, New York City's police and fire departments still lack a workable joint command structure for allocating resources during a crisis. While radio communications have improved, the metropolitan area has no unified strategy for distributing information to the more than 600 public safety agencies that would have immediate concerns if Manhattan were attacked again.

Given the vast scope and complexity of the challenge, it is hardly surprising that homeland security policy still falls short. One process reform, however, that could curb the misplaced focus on acquisitions and pay large dividends in improved planning and response capability at the local level is a change in the way Washington sends money to localities.

With minor exceptions, the programs that Congress and the Bush administration have rolled out since 9/11 have provided block grants. Block grants are to states and localities what entitlements are to citizens: money that flows to them automatically from the federal government. Most of the money goes to state bureaucracies, which keep some of it for overhead, then pass most of the rest down to localities.

Block grants serve a variety of purposes. The Transportation Security Administration, for example, has given grants to ports and airports to improve baggage and cargo-container security. The Justice and Homeland Security departments, meanwhile, hand out money on the basis of formulas that can include

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anything from a state's population to the number of ships that call at its ports. But these formulas are not always fair; for one thing, they inevitably give a minimum sum to every state, regardless of population or density of vulnerable sites. Thus, in a round of grants released in April, Wyoming got nearly $39 per citizen while New York state, home of the nation's number one target, got less than $6. Nevertheless, the administrative simplicity of formula grants, and the lure of easy money for their recipients, have made them popular with Congress. Sen. Hillary Clinton has pushed hard for a $3 billion program to give homeland security block grants directly to cities.

But there's a better way to hand out funds for public safety. The first Bush and the Clinton administrations relied on competitive program grants. To win these grants, states and localities had to submit proposals designed to demonstrate that they had come up with the best possible use for a given pot of money. The proposals were then ranked by experts theoretically insulated from political pressure, and the best were awarded funds. In reality, the process is a lot messier—nearly all major competitive grant programs ensure that every state gets at least some money and that small towns with modest grant-writing resources get their share. Still, competitive grants offer three advantages: They encourage innovative thinking, they allow the designers of each competition to provide implicit strategic guidance without intruding upon local prerogatives, and they are likelier to send money where it will be used well.

With competitive grants, says Lowell, Mass., police superintendent Edward Davis, "you get more money only if you're the best." At any given time, some public safety agencies will have better ideas and more acute needs than others. And knowing that funding might not come keeps localities on their toes. It means that they can never relax, a state of affairs that concentrates the mind and spurs innovation. Many of the new police tactics that led to the epic decline in crime in the 1990s—Chicago's high-speed case-file processing, New York's crackdown on minor offenses, San Diego's successful anti-graffiti efforts—were conceived in a climate of experimentation produced in part by the need to compete for funds. A similar funding structure for homeland security would likely produce a tidal wave of innovation.

Replacing block grants with competitive grants would also help the Department of Homeland Security provide guidance without resorting to coercion or excessive intrusion. Many aspects of homeland security require strong federal leadership. Getting radio systems to work together—a key problem New York City agencies encountered on 9/11—for example, requires common standards. DHS should impose them. Unfortunately, when states and cities have a *de facto* entitlement to money, they feel little compulsion to obey, and federal bureaucrats know they will face angry members of Congress if they deny funding requests over minor failings.

So far, this is exactly what has happened. Block grants currently require that localities have in place "incident command structures" for coordinating police, fire, and rescue resources during emergencies. But New York City's police and fire departments couldn't agree on an incident command structure, and in May, Mayor Michael Bloomberg imposed one. Even the new structure, however, leaves responsibility for many types of incidents unclear and, as a result, may violate the requirements for block grants. Dozens of other cities have ignored federal rules much more blatantly, and none has lost money as a result. While competitive processes are not immune to political pressure, they make it easier for federal officials to say no when cities and states ignore directives.

Finally, competitive grants are more likely than block grants to send funds where they are most needed. The primary all-purpose DHS grant program—Basic Homeland Security Formula Grants—gave so much money to lightly populated states and so little to large cities that Congress and the administration created a supplemental $894 million Urban Area Security Grants program to aid big cities directly. This program also had problems: It based many of its calculations on size and population density. As a result, large but out-of-the-way cities like Memphis got cash, while small, target-rich cities like Los Alamos, New Mexico, were out of the running.

The abundance of potential targets and the difficulty of identifying them makes it impossible to come up with a foolproof formula for handing out money to the entire country. Indeed, DHS itself may take as long as five years to complete its first analysis inventory of the nation's critical infrastructure. In the meantime, the nation will be better off if cities, counties, and states—which should know their own vulnerabilities—have to make the case for deserving federal help. This process could go far toward quickly providing DHS with a detailed map of the relevant infrastructure, even as it forces local leaders to think hard about security priorities and end their wasteful buying sprees. ♦

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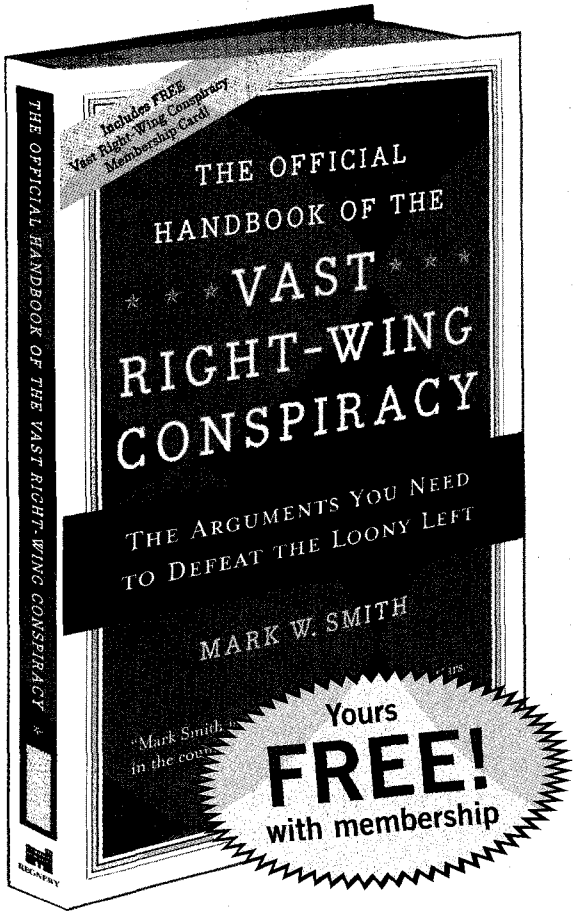

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The Connection

Not so long ago, the ties between Iraq and al Qaeda were conventional wisdom. The conventional wisdom was right.

By Stephen F. Hayes

"The president convinced the country with a mixture of documents that turned out to be forged and blatantly false assertions that Saddam was in league with al Qaeda," claimed former Vice President Al Gore last Wednesday.

"There's absolutely no evidence that Iraq was supporting al Qaeda, ever," declared Richard Clarke, former counterterrorism official under George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, in an interview on March 21, 2004.

The editor of the *Los Angeles Times* labeled as "myth" the claim that links between Iraq and al Qaeda had been proved. A recent dispatch from Reuters simply asserted, "There is no link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda." *60 Minutes* anchor Lesley Stahl was equally certain: "There was no connection."

And on it goes. This conventional wisdom—that our two most determined enemies were not in league, now or ever—is comforting. It is also wrong.

In late February 2004, Christopher Carney made an astonishing discovery. Carney, a political science professor from Pennsylvania on leave to work at the Pentagon, was poring over a list of officers in Saddam Hussein's much-feared security force, the Fedayeen Saddam. One name stood out: Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Hikmat Shakir. The name was not spelled exactly as Carney had seen it before, but such discrepancies are common. Having studied the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda for 18 months, he immediately recognized the potential significance of his find. According to a report last week in the *Wall Street Journal*, Shakir appears on three different lists of Fedayeen officers.

An Iraqi of that name, Carney knew, had been present at an al Qaeda summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on January 5-8, 2000. U.S. intelligence officials believe this was a chief planning meeting for the September 11 attacks. Shakir had been nominally employed as a "greeter" by Malaysian Airlines, a job he told associates he had gotten through a contact at the Iraqi embassy. More curious, Shakir's Iraqi embassy contact controlled his schedule, telling him when to show up for work and when to take a day off.

A greeter typically meets VIPs upon arrival and accompanies them through the sometimes onerous procedures of foreign travel. Shakir was instructed to work on January 5, 2000, and on that day, he escorted one Khalid al Mihdhar from his plane to a waiting car. Rather than bid his guest farewell at that point, as a greeter typically would have, Shakir climbed into the car with al Mihdhar and accompanied him to the Kuala Lumpur condominium of Yazid Sufaat, the American-born al Qaeda terrorist who hosted the planning meeting.

The meeting lasted for three days. Khalid al Mihdhar departed Kuala Lumpur for Bangkok and eventually Los Angeles. Twenty months later, he was aboard American Airlines Flight 77 when it plunged into the Pentagon at 9:38 A.M. on September 11. So were Nawaf al Hazmi and his younger brother, Salem, both of whom were also present at the Kuala Lumpur meeting.

Six days after September 11, Shakir was captured in Doha, Qatar. He had in his possession contact information for several senior al Qaeda terrorists: Zahid Sheikh Mohammed, brother of September 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed; Musab Yasin, brother of Abdul Rahman Yasin, the Iraqi who helped mix the chemicals for the first World Trade Center attack and was given safe haven upon his return to Baghdad; and Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, otherwise known as Abu Hajer al Iraqi, described by one top al Qaeda detainee as Osama bin Laden's "best friend."

Despite all of this, Shakir was released. On October 21, 2001, he boarded a plane for Baghdad, via Amman, Jordan. He never made the connection. Shakir was detained by Jordanian intelligence. Immediately following his capture, according to U.S. officials familiar with the intelligence on Shakir, the Iraqi government began exerting pressure on the Jordanians to release him. Some U.S.

Stephen F. Hayes is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard. *Parts of this article are drawn from his new book,* The Connection: How al Qaeda's Collaboration with Saddam Hussein has Endangered America *(HarperCollins).*

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intelligence officials—primarily at the CIA—believed that Iraq's demand for Shakir's release was pro forma, no different from the requests governments regularly make on behalf of citizens detained by foreign governments. But others, pointing to the flurry of phone calls and personal appeals from the Iraqi government to the Jordanians, disagreed. This panicked reaction, they said, reflected an interest in Shakir at the highest levels of Saddam Hussein's regime.

CIA officials who interviewed Shakir in Jordan reported that he was generally uncooperative. But even in refusing to talk, he provided some important information: The interrogators concluded that his evasive answers reflected counterinterrogation techniques so sophisticated that he had probably learned them from a government intelligence service. Shakir's Iraqi nationality, his contacts with the Iraqi embassy in Malaysia, the keen interest of Baghdad in his case, and now the appearance of his name on the rolls of Fedayeen officers—all this makes the Iraqi intelligence service the most likely source of his training.

The Jordanians, convinced that Shakir worked for Iraqi intelligence, went to the CIA with a bold proposal: Let's flip him. That is, the Jordanians would allow Shakir to return to Iraq on condition that he agree to report back on the activities of Iraqi intelligence. And, in one of the most egregious mistakes by U.S. intelligence after September 11, the CIA agreed to Shakir's release. He posted a modest bail and returned to Iraq.

In one of the most egregious mistakes by U.S. intelligence after September 11, the CIA agreed to Shakir's release.

He hasn't been heard from since.

The Shakir story is perhaps the government's strongest indication that Saddam and al Qaeda may have worked together on September 11. It is far from conclusive; conceivably there were two Ahmed Hikmat Shakirs. And in itself, the evidence does not show that Saddam Hussein personally had foreknowledge of the attacks. Still—like the long, on-again-off-again relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda—it cannot be dismissed.

There was a time not long ago when the conventional wisdom skewed heavily toward a Saddam-al Qaeda links. In 1998 and early 1999, the Iraq-al Qaeda connection was widely reported in the American and international media. Former intelligence officers and government officials speculated about the relationship and its dangerous implications for the world. The information in the news reports came from foreign and domestic intelligence services. It was featured in mainstream media outlets including international wire services, prominent newsweeklies, and network radio and television broadcasts.

Newsweek magazine ran an article in its January 11, 1999, issue headed "Saddam + Bin Laden?" "Here's what is known so far," it read:

Saddam Hussein, who has a long record of supporting terrorism, is trying to rebuild his intelligence network overseas—assets that would allow him to establish a terrorism network. U.S. sources say he is reaching out to Islamic terrorists, including some who may be linked to Osama bin Laden, the wealthy Saudi exile accused of masterminding the bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa last summer.

Four days later, on January 15, 1999, ABC News reported that three intelligence agencies believed that Saddam had offered asylum to bin Laden:

Intelligence sources say bin Laden's long relationship with the Iraqis began as he helped Sudan's fundamentalist government in their efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. . . . ABC News has learned that in December, an Iraqi intelligence chief named Faruq Hijazi, now Iraq's ambassador to Turkey, made a secret trip to Afghanistan to meet with bin Laden. Three intelligence agencies tell ABC News they cannot be certain what was discussed, but almost certainly, they say, bin Laden has been told he would be welcome in Baghdad.

NPR reporter Mike Shuster interviewed Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA's counterterrorism center, and offered this report:

Iraq's contacts with bin Laden go back some years, to at least 1994, when, according to one U.S. government source, Hijazi met him when bin Laden lived in Sudan. According to Cannistraro, Iraq invited bin Laden to live in Baghdad to be nearer to potential targets of terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. . . . Some experts believe bin Laden might be tempted to live in Iraq because of his reported desire to obtain chemical or biological weapons. CIA Director George Tenet referred to that in recent testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee when he said bin Laden was planning additional attacks on American targets.

By mid-February 1999, journalists did not even feel the need to qualify these claims of an Iraq-al Qaeda rela-

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tionship. An Associated Press dispatch that ran in the *Washington Post* ended this way: "The Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has offered asylum to bin Laden, who openly supports Iraq against Western powers."

Where did journalists get the idea that Saddam and bin Laden might be coordinating efforts? Among other places, from high-ranking Clinton administration officials.

In the spring of 1998—well before the U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa—the Clinton administration indicted Osama bin Laden. The indictment, unsealed a few months later, prominently cited al Qaeda's agreement to collaborate with Iraq on weapons of mass destruction. The Clinton Justice Department had been concerned about negative public reaction to its potentially capturing bin Laden without "a vehicle for extradition," official paperwork charging him with a crime. It was "not an afterthought" to include the al Qaeda-Iraq connection in the indictment, says an official familiar with the deliberations. "It couldn't have gotten into the indictment unless someone was willing to testify to it under oath." The Clinton administration's indictment read unequivocally:

Al Qaeda reached an understanding with the government of Iraq that al Qaeda would not work against that government and that on particular projects, specifically including weapons development, al Qaeda would work cooperatively with the Government of Iraq.

"Al Qaeda reached an understanding with the government of Iraq that al Qaeda would not work against that government and that on particular projects, specifically including weapons development, al Qaeda would work cooperatively with the Government of Iraq."

—From the Clinton administration's 1998 indictment of Osama bin Laden

On August 7, 1998, al Qaeda terrorists struck almost simultaneously at U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The blasts killed 257 people—including 12 Americans—and wounded nearly 5,000. The Clinton administration determined within five days that al Qaeda was responsible for the attacks and moved swiftly to retaliate. One of the targets would be in Afghanistan. But the Clinton national security team wanted to strike hard simultaneously, much as the terrorists had. "The decision to go to [Sudan] was an add-on," says a senior intelligence officer involved in the targeting. "They wanted a dual strike."

A small group of Clinton administration officials, led by CIA director George Tenet and national security adviser Sandy Berger, reviewed a number of al Qaeda-linked targets in Sudan. Although bin Laden had left the African nation two years earlier, U.S. officials believed that he was still deeply involved in the Sudanese government-run Military Industrial Corporation (MIC).

The United States retaliated on August 20, 1998, striking al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and the al Shifa pharmaceutical plant outside Khartoum. "Let me be very clear about this," said President Bill Clinton, addressing the nation after the strikes. "There is no question in my mind that the Sudanese factory was producing chemicals that are used—and can be used—in VX gas. This was a plant that was producing chemical warfare-related weapons, and we have physical evidence of that."

The physical evidence was a soil sample containing EMPTA, a precursor for VX nerve gas. Almost immediately, the decision to strike at al Shifa aroused controversy. U.S. officials expressed skepticism that the plant produced pharmaceuticals at all, but reporters on the ground in Sudan found aspirin bottles and a variety of other indications that the plant had, in fact, manufactured drugs. For journalists and many at the CIA, the case was hardly clear-cut. For one thing, the soil sample was collected from outside the plant's front gate, not within the grounds, and an internal CIA memo issued a month before the attacks had recommended gathering additional soil samples from the site before reaching any conclusions. "It caused a lot of heartburn at the agency," recalls a former top intelligence official.

The Clinton administration sought to dispel doubts about the targeting and, on August 24, 1998, made available a "senior intelligence official" to brief reporters on background. The briefer cited "strong ties between the plant and Iraq" as one of the justifications for attacking it. The next day, undersecretary of state for political affairs Thomas Pickering briefed reporters at the National Press Club. Pickering explained that the intelligence community had been monitoring the plant for "at least two years," and that the evidence was "quite clear on contacts between Sudan and Iraq." In all, at least six top Clinton administration officials have defended on the record the strikes in Sudan by citing a link to Iraq.

The Iraqis, of course, denied any involvement. "The Clinton government has fabricated yet another lie to the effect that Iraq had helped Sudan produce this chemical weapon," declared the political editor of Radio Iraq. Still,

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even as Iraq denied helping Sudan and al Qaeda with weapons of mass destruction, the regime lauded Osama bin Laden. On August 27, 1998, 20 days after al Qaeda attacked the U.S. embassies in Africa, *Babel*, the government newspaper run by Saddam's son Uday Hussein, published an editorial proclaiming bin Laden "an Arab and Islamic hero."

Five months later, the same Richard Clarke who would one day claim that there was "absolutely no evidence that Iraq was supporting al Qaeda, ever," told the *Washington Post* that the U.S. government was "sure" that Iraq was behind the production of the chemical weapons precursor at the al Shifa plant. "Clarke said U.S. intelligence does not know how much of the substance was produced at al Shifa or what happened to it," wrote *Post* reporter Vernon Loeb, in an article published January 23, 1999. "But he said that intelligence exists linking bin Laden to al Shifa's current and past operators, the Iraqi nerve gas experts, and the National Islamic Front in Sudan."

Later in 1999, the Congressional Research Service published a report on the psychology of terrorism. The report created a stir in May 2002 when critics of President Bush cited it to suggest that his administration should have given more thought to suicide hijackings. On page 7 of the 178-page document was a passage about a possible al Qaeda attack on Washington, D.C., that "could take several forms." In one scenario, "suicide bombers belonging to al Qaeda's Martyrdom Battalion could crash-land an aircraft packed with high explosives (C-4 and semtex) into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency, or the White House."

A network anchor wondered if it was possible that the White House had somehow missed the report. A senator cited it in calling for an investigation into the 9/11 attacks. A journalist read excerpts to the secretary of defense and raised a familiar question: "What did you know and when did you know it?"

But another passage of the same report has gone largely unnoticed. Two paragraphs before, also on page 7, is this: "If Iraq's Saddam Hussein decide[s] to use terrorists to attack the continental United States [he] would likely turn to bin Laden's al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is among the Islamic groups recruiting increasingly skilled professionals," including "Iraqi chemical weapons experts and others capable of helping to develop WMD. Al Qaeda poses the most serious terrorist threat to U.S. security interests, for al Qaeda's well-trained terrorists are engaged in a terrorist jihad against U.S. interests worldwide."

CIA director George Tenet echoed these sentiments in a letter to Congress on October 7, 2002:

—Our understanding of the relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda is evolving and is based on sources of varying reliability. Some of the information we have received comes from detainees, including some of high rank.

—We have solid reporting of senior level contacts between Iraq and Al Qaeda going back a decade.

—Credible information indicates that Iraq and Al Qaeda have discussed safe haven and reciprocal nonaggression.

—Since Operation Enduring Freedom, we have solid evidence of the presence in Iraq of Al Qaeda members, including some that have been in Baghdad.

—We have credible reporting that Al Qaeda leaders sought contacts in Iraq who could help them acquire W.M.D. capabilities. The reporting also stated that Iraq has provided training to Al Qaeda members in the areas of poisons and gases and making conventional bombs.

—Iraq's increasing support to extremist Palestinians coupled with growing indications of relationship with Al Qaeda suggest that Baghdad's links to terrorists will increase, even absent U.S. military action.

Tenet has never backed away from these assessments. Senator Mark Dayton, a Democrat from Minnesota, challenged him on the Iraq-al Qaeda connection in an exchange before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 9, 2004. Tenet reiterated his judgment that there had been numerous "contacts" between Iraq and al Qaeda, and that in the days before the war the Iraqi regime had provided "training and safe haven" to al Qaeda associates, including Abu Musab al Zarqawi. What the U.S. intelligence community could not claim was that the Iraqi regime had "command and control" over al Qaeda terrorists. Still, said Tenet, "it was inconceivable to me that Zarqawi and two dozen [Egyptian Islamic Jihad] operatives could be operating in Baghdad without Iraq knowing."

So what should Washington do now? The first thing the Bush administration should do is create a team of intelligence experts—or preferably competing teams, each composed of terrorism experts and forensic investigators—to explore the connection between Iraq and al Qaeda. For more than a year, the 1,400-member Iraq Survey Group has investigated the nature and scope of Iraq's program to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. At various times in its brief history, a small subgroup of ISG investigators (never more than 15 people) has looked into Iraqi connections with al Qaeda. This is not enough.

Despite the lack of resources devoted to Iraq-al Qaeda connections, the Iraq Survey Group has obtained some interesting new information. In the spring of 1992,

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according to Iraqi Intelligence documents obtained by the ISG after the war, Osama bin Laden met with Iraqi Intelligence officials in Syria. A second document, this one captured by the Iraqi National Congress and authenticated by the Defense Intelligence Agency, then listed bin Laden as an Iraqi Intelligence "asset" who "is in good relationship with our section in Syria." A third Iraqi Intelligence document, this one an undated internal memo, discusses strategy for an upcoming meeting between Iraqi Intelligence, bin Laden, and a representative of the Taliban. On the agenda: "attacking American targets." This seems significant.

A second critical step would be to declassify as much of the Iraq-al Qaeda intelligence as possible. Those skeptical of any connection claim that any evidence of a relationship must have been "cherry picked" from much larger piles of existing intelligence that makes these Iraq-al Qaeda links less compelling. Let's see it all, or as much of it as can be disclosed without compromising sources and methods.

Among the most important items to be declassified: the Iraq Survey Group documents discussed above; any and all reporting and documentation—including photographs—pertaining to Ahmed Hikmat Shakir, the Iraqi and alleged Saddam Fedayeen officer present at the September 11 planning meeting; interview transcripts with top Iraqi intelligence officers, al Qaeda terrorists, and leaders of al Qaeda affiliate Ansar al Islam; documents recovered in postwar Iraq indicating that Abdul Rahman Yasin, the Iraqi who has admitted mixing the chemicals for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, was given safe haven and financial support by the Iraqi regime upon returning to Baghdad two weeks after the attack; any and all reporting and documentation—including photographs—related to Mohammed Atta's visits to Prague; portions of the debriefings of Faruq Hijazi, former deputy director of Iraqi intelligence, who met personally with bin Laden at least twice, and an evaluation of his credibility.

It is of course important for the Bush administration and CIA director George Tenet to back up their assertions of an Iraq-al Qaeda connection. Similarly, declassifying intelligence from the 1990s might shed light on why top Clinton officials were adamant about an Iraq-al Qaeda connection in Sudan and why the Clinton Justice Department included the Iraq-al Qaeda relationship in its 1998 indictment of Osama bin Laden. More specifically, what intelligence did Richard Clarke see that allowed him to tell the *Washington Post* that the U.S. government was "sure" Iraq had provided a chemical weapons precursor to the al Qaeda-linked al Shifa facility in Sudan? What would compel former secretary of defense William Cohen to tell the September 11 Commission, under oath, that an executive from the al Qaeda-linked plant "traveled to Baghdad to meet with the father of the VX [nerve gas] program"? And why did Thomas Pickering, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, tell reporters, "We see evidence that we think is quite clear on contacts between Sudan and Iraq. In fact, al Shifa officials, early in the company's history, we believe were in touch with Iraqi individuals associated with Iraq's VX program"? Other Clinton administration figures, including a "senior intelligence official" who briefed reporters on background, cited telephone intercepts between a plant manager and Emad al Ani, the father of Iraq's chemical weapons program.

We have seen important elements of the pre-September 11 intelligence available to the Bush administration; it's time for the American public to see more of the intelligence on Iraq and al Qaeda from the 1990s, especially the reporting about the August 1998 attacks in Kenya and Tanzania and the U.S. counterstrikes two weeks later.

Until this material is declassified, there will be gaps in our knowledge. Indeed, even after the full record is made public, some uncertainties will no doubt remain.

The connection between Saddam and al Qaeda isn't one of them. ♦

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They're No Angels

Los Angeles's pay-to-play politics

By David DeVoss

Los Angeles

Early one morning in April, Los Angeles commuters on the Hollywood Freeway thought their prayers had been answered. On the radio, Mayor James Hahn was promising to eliminate traffic congestion on the main highway that runs from downtown to the San Fernando Valley. "Tomorrow we'll be beginning construction on a $5 billion remake of the 101 Freeway," he chirped. "The only problem for commuters is we will have to be shutting down all lanes in both directions on the freeway for the next 12 months."

Hahn waited a beat, and then admitted that his fleeting promise of orderly transportation was just a joke. "April fools!"

Tall, slim, and handsome, James Hahn, 53, could play a mayor on TV if he weren't one in real life. The son of a South Los Angeles pol beloved for opening municipal government jobs to blacks, Hahn rode his pedigree, prior service as city attorney, and unswerving loyalty to the Democratic party to City Hall three years ago. At his inauguration Hahn vowed to create a service-oriented, user-friendly city attuned to the needs of its neighborhoods. Today, however, Hahn's administration is in shambles. A month seldom passes when the city controller doesn't discover some new instance of fiscal mismanagement in L.A.'s wildly politicized departments, all monitored by 350 commissioners handpicked by Hahn and the City Council. The U.S. attorney, the L.A. district attorney, and a local grand jury all are investigating the city's opaque procedures for awarding municipal contracts. Four deputy mayors already have resigned, along with several tainted commissioners. Those still connected to City Hall recently learned that all their emails relating to city contracts are being subpoenaed.

The federal and county investigations are both focusing on the appointed commissioners overseeing the city's airports, the harbor, and water and power, three enormous municipal monopolies that collectively account for more than $3.5 billion in annual revenue. At issue is whether the building contractors, political consultants, union bosses, and property developers often appointed as commissioners have turned the process of civilian oversight into a "pay-to-play" shell game where campaign contributions and unsolicited gift-giving are unspoken prerequisites to doing business with the city.

"L.A. basically is a clean city, but its tolerance for corruption is increasing," says City Controller Laura Chick, a self-proclaimed "truth-teller" who gets ready for work by listening to skirling bagpipes on her car stereo. "We have an environment ripe for fraud." Chick's performance reviews of city departments have shown a pattern of waste among commissioners. The pattern extends from the Department of Water and Power—which signed a $3 million contract with a politically connected public relations firm, despite already having a $13 million in-house publicity staff—to Van Nuys airport, which has lost more than $15 million since 1990 by failing to renegotiate leases to reflect fair market value.

The first woman ever elected to citywide office in Los Angeles, Chick often rails against the "sexist, good-old-boys work environment" at City Hall that has produced "an arrogance in city government that's so thick you could cut it with a knife." To get her point across she created an "Ethics Brigade" of community activists ready to testify at public hearings at a moment's notice. Two months ago, the brigade scored a major triumph when it forced an embarrassed City Council to pass an ordinance prohibiting future city commissioners from soliciting campaign contributions. The mayor's office was quick to make its irritation known. A few days after testifying in favor of the ordinance, Bonny Herman, who represents the San Fernando Valley on the Metropolitan Water District's board of directors, was summarily dismissed. Says Herman: "I was doing a fabulous job, but now I'm gone and the 1.8 million people of the San Fernando Valley have no representation on the MWD."

The idea of city commissions headed by irreproachable community leaders was introduced to Los Angeles almost a century ago by progressive reformers from the Midwest who believed civilian oversight of politicians and bureau-

David DeVoss, East-West News Service editor, reports on California politics.

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crats would insure independent, nonpartisan government. With the exception of a few decades colorfully recounted by James Ellroy, the system largely worked until the arrival of Hahn. "A mayor can appoint independent thinkers or robots to serve on city commissions," says David Fleming, a former member of the city's Ethics Commission who is now executive director of the Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley. "This mayor prefers robots."

With 3.8 million residents, Los Angeles has a larger population than 25 states. The area it covers is so extensive that St. Louis, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, and Manhattan all could nestle within the city limits and have room to spare. Centrifugal forces in a city of this size are enormous. Civic leaders know that boroughs would provide better government than what L.A. has now—a mayor and 15 city councilmen. The 15-member city council system was setup in 1876 when Los Angeles had 9,000 residents. Today, each council member represents more than 230,000 residents. But change would decentralize power and jeopardize the grip that unions, property developers, and political contributors have on the existing power structure.

The seeds of the current morass were sown in the depths of L.A.'s worst nightmare. In 2002, after years of fruitless lobbying, neighborhood activists in the San Fernando Valley finally succeeded in placing a proposition on the ballot that would have allowed the Valley to secede from L.A. and form an independent city if a majority of voters approved. Used as a cash cow for decades, the Valley is home to 35 percent of the city's population and encompasses roughly 50 percent of its geographic area. Yet the Valley receives less services for its tax dollars than any other part of the city. There are fewer libraries, police stations, and museums in the Valley. The L.A. Basin has the beginnings of three subway lines, but despite paying $1.3 billion into a mass transit fund, the Valley has only clogged freeways. A new Valley municipality, secessionists claimed, would rank as the safest city among the nation's top ten and the sixth largest city overall. The main effect of dividing Los Angeles, they argued, would be the creation of two smaller, more efficient, and representative city governments.

There was little chance of the measure passing given that people throughout Los Angeles were allowed to vote on it. But City Hall took no chances, especially since Hollywood was trying to secede along with the Valley. Even San Pedro, the community where James Hahn lives, wanted to jump ship. If the Valley and Hollywood left, why couldn't affluent Brentwood, West Los Angeles, and Pacific Palisades? Troublemakers on the Westside already had a plan to create a city called Rancho San Vicente if the Valley managed to break free. Was it L.A.'s destiny to consist of Watts, the eastern barrios, and a civic center only Ridley Scott could love?

For Hahn and his minions at City Hall there could be no compromise in the fight to save Los Angeles. City contractors were urged to contribute to the L.A. Unified campaign by the commissioners overseeing their contracts. Commissioners favoring Valley cityhood, even those who tried to remain neutral, were pressured to resign. Supervisors solicited donations from city employees; unions with city contracts asked their members for money. In the end, Mayor Hahn collected $6.2 million that he used to finance a massive disinformation campaign. A majority of voters in the San Fernando Valley did elect to form their own city, but they were far outnumbered by No votes from people in the rest of the city.

Backroom deals made in the rush to defeat secession are being investigated. St. Louis-based public relations firm Fleishman-Hillard, for example, was awarded a two-year $560,000 contract to "develop key messages" for the Port of Los Angeles after its executives paid $10,000 to dine with the mayor at an anti-secession fundraiser. Until last month, when the company cut all ties with Los Angeles, Fleishman-Hillard had contracts worth nearly $3 million with city agencies. The relationship has been profitable for both sides. Since 1998, Fleishman and its executives have contributed more than $135,000 to candidates and their political committees. Over the same period of time, the Department of Water and Power alone awarded Fleishman-Hillard $20 million worth of business.

Law firms that host political fundraisers for Hahn and City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo are remarkably successful at obtaining city contracts. Last year, Los Angeles paid $18.9 million for outside legal assistance, much of it going to firms whose partners contribute heavily to city campaigns and are registered as lobbyists for clients doing business with the city. According to research conducted by *Los Angeles Times* investigative reporter Patrick McGreevy, lucrative contracts for outside work that could have been done by some of the 820 lawyers on the city attorney's staff were approved or expanded within weeks of political fundraisers' being held.

In 2001, Los Angeles construction firm Tutor-Saliba was fined $29.5 million for submitting false claims on a subway construction project. Despite this lapse, the company last year received a $34 million contract to build a terminal for L.A. airport shuttle buses. Why did Tutor-Saliba get another contract? A $100,000 donation to Hahn's 2002 anti-secession campaign didn't hurt. Neither did the $114,000 the company and its executives gave Hahn the year before when he ran for mayor.

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If there is a smoking gun amidst all this questionable activity, it probably will be found at LAX, where Hahn's administration is promoting a $9.1 billion airport expansion designed to harden the facility against terrorist attack. The project—the second largest municipal development in U.S. history behind only Boston's "big dig"—is highly unpopular in neighborhoods surrounding the airport. Even L.A.'s spendthrift city council has criticized it. A Rand Corporation analysis concluded last year that it would create as many security problems as it solved. But the Hahn administration—which claims it lacks the funds to keep many libraries and swimming pools open this summer—is pushing ahead nonetheless, many believe, because it's the type of development that prompts companies competing for contracts to make political contributions.

A San Francisco-based engineering company called URS Corporation says it lost a multimillion-dollar contract because of its refusal to contribute $100,000 to the anti-secession campaign. Federal investigators say the president of the Airport Commission, a pugnacious attorney appointed by the mayor because of his fundraising prowess, told URS's corporate lobbyist that no future contracts could be expected when money was not forthcoming. Both individuals deny the exchange. But the fact remains that a new multimillion-dollar contract for continuing the work URS currently conducts has been given tentatively to another consortium which contributed a total of $141,000 to the anti-secession effort.

Los Angeles eventually may get its ethical house in order, but even if it institutes a transparent contracting process the city will remain crippled for years because of profligate administrators. Los Angeles has the highest paid city employees in the country. If streetlights, asphalt, and library books seem in short supply it's because 85 percent of the city budget goes to salaries. It's unlikely that generous annual raises will ever be reduced since union leaders who negotiate the contracts also sit on commissions monitoring public works.

Several years ago, the Los Angeles police union negotiated what may be the best compensation package in America. Under the new guidelines, a cop with 33 years on the force can retire at age 54 with full medical benefits and 90 percent of his annual salary, which for a lieutenant amounts to around $100,000. Naturally, with a deal like this, everyone who had 33 years of service immediately applied for retirement. Hiring more junior officers might have eased the ensuing labor crisis. Instead, the city council agreed to a program that pays people with 33 years of seniority to keep working for an additional five years while simultaneously allowing them to collect their retirement benefits. Not only do police continue to receive pay raises and promotions during their five additional years of service, but they also get 6 percent interest on their accruing pension, which is held in a special tax-free account. The result is that a lieutenant who agrees to work for 38 years can walk away with a $600,000 nest egg in addition to his regular pension benefits.

In return for union support three years ago, Hahn promised the police a "compressed" work week consisting of three 12-hour days. Police loved the idea since, freed from the daily commute, they could move their families out of Los Angeles. Unfortunately court schedules remain unchanged, which means police often must drive back to L.A. on their days off to testify. Says one LAPD insider: "Not too many of the guys mind since this gets them into double overtime pretty quickly."

Until recently, the city and county of Los Angeles covered ballooning salaries and pensions with bonds, increased fees, half-cent sales tax hikes, and surcharges. But now L.A. faces a $250 million budget deficit thanks to the fiscal crisis in Sacramento. L.A. sheriff Lee Baca releases around 130 prisoners a day because, he claims, reduced funding has forced him to close jails. Many are car thieves, abusive spouses, and sexual predators who serve less than 10 percent of their sentence.

L.A.'s pay-to-play climate does not necessarily make the city a less attractive place to work. Witness the rise of Cody Cluff, a 45-year-old accountant who nine years ago persuaded City Hall to let him start the Entertainment Industry Development Corporation. Created to promote film production in L.A. (talk about coals-to-Newcastle), the EIDC was a great place to work. Cluff paid himself a $200,000 salary plus a $1,800-a-month housing allowance. His travel and entertainment expenses averaged $30,000 a month. Cluff had so much money that he even gave $10,000 to the Pittsburgh Film Office, an act of generosity later explained by the fact it was headed by his mistress.

You might ask why the EIDC's board of directors allowed such behavior. Because the board consisted of L.A.'s 15 city council members plus L.A. county's five supervisors. Informed by the district attorney in late 2002 that Cluff had embezzled $59,000 for strip club parties and other personal extravagances, the board pronounced itself shocked by his behavior. One reason for their lack of oversight may have been that Cluff gave $170,000 of the public money he collected to his board members in the form of campaign contributions. As extra insurance he even gave $25,000 to fight the secession of San Fernando Valley.

Last week, Cluff pleaded guilty to a felony and agreed to make restitution in the amount of $80,000. It is a manageable sum under the circumstances: The elected officials on the EIDC board awarded him a $287,000 severance package when the scandal broke. ♦

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Olympic Games

Athletics, ancient and modern By Bruce Thornton

The modern Olympic marathon derives its name, of course, from the famous victory of the Greeks over the invading Persians in 490 B.C. at the town of Marathon, about twenty-six-and-a-half miles from Athens—which is the distance the runner Pheidippides covered to bring home the news of the victory, after which he dropped dead. As it happens, the story is a myth. Even the distance between Athens and Marathon isn't accurate. The modern race actually duplicates the distance from Windsor Castle to the Olympic stadium, established at the London games in 1908.

The truth about the marathon is just one of many debunking facts that Stephen G. Miller presents in *Ancient Greek Athletics*, his well-researched, comprehensive survey of ancient sports.

A professor of archaeology at the University of California at Berkeley, Miller directs the excavations at Nemea, a site of one of the major ancient games. In *Ancient Greek Athletics* he combines evidence from archaeology, art, and literature into a detailed panorama, from the origins of ancient athletics in Homer to its professionalization in the Roman period. Along the way Miller gives an entertaining survey of everything from the mechanics of starting blocks to the layout of the festival sites—all aimed toward demonstrating the central place of athletics in the culture of the Greeks.

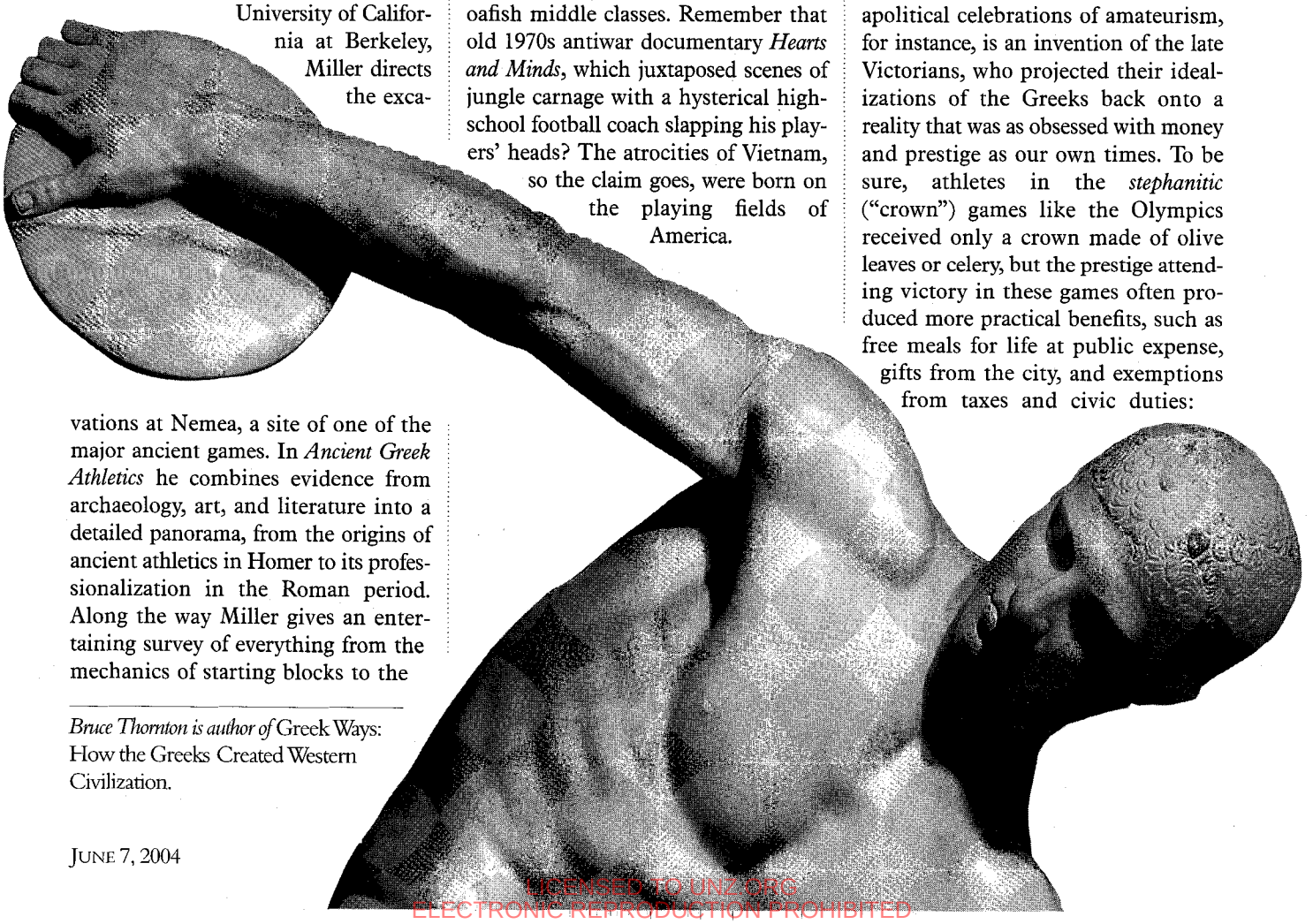
Then as now, sports conjures up within us all sorts of mythic longings and meanings that cry out for analysis. Unfortunately, the current interpretation of athletics—both classical and modern—reflects the anticapitalist prejudices of a worn-out Marxist cultural criticism.

This received wisdom tells us that competition and hyper-masculinity are really nothing more than a training-program for the shock troops of capitalist and imperialist hegemony—although sports also provide a distracting and profitable spectacle for the oafish middle classes. Remember that old 1970s antiwar documentary *Hearts and Minds*, which juxtaposed scenes of jungle carnage with a hysterical high-school football coach slapping his players' heads? The atrocities of Vietnam, so the claim goes, were born on the playing fields of America.

Ancient Greek Athletics
by Stephen G. Miller
Yale University Press, 288 pp., $35

Yet the larger significance of sports is much more interesting than these tired clichés, and as Stephen Miller's knowledgeable and entertaining book shows, that meaning will be found among the ancient Greeks, the inventors of athletic competition. All the goods and evils, all the contradictions and values associated with our athletic obsessions, existed among the Greeks as well.

When the first modern Olympic games were held in Athens in 1896, various legends and pseudo-classicisms were ginned up to claim a continuity with the ancient games, held from 776 B.C. until the Emperor Theodosius abolished them in A.D. 393. Debunking all this is great fun, but it obscures the parallels the modern games actually have with the ancient. The idea that the ancient games were apolitical celebrations of amateurism, for instance, is an invention of the late Victorians, who projected their idealizations of the Greeks back onto a reality that was as obsessed with money and prestige as our own times. To be sure, athletes in the *stephanitic* ("crown") games like the Olympics received only a crown made of olive leaves or celery, but the prestige attending victory in these games often produced more practical benefits, such as free meals for life at public expense, gifts from the city, and exemptions from taxes and civic duties:



Bruce Thornton is author of Greek Ways: How the Greeks Created Western Civilization.

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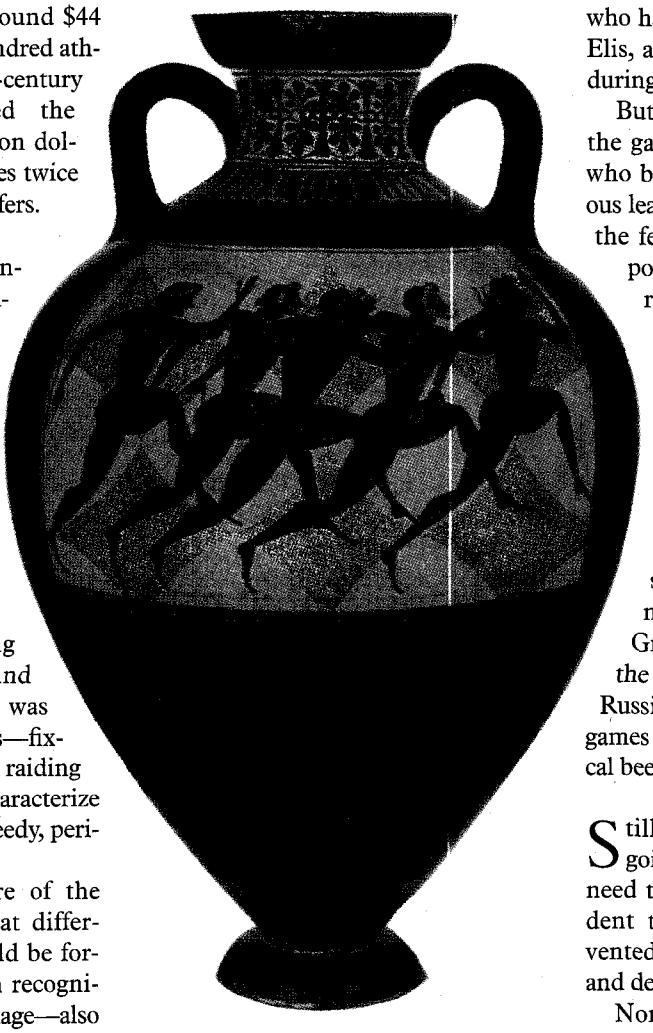
rewards as profitable as today's endorsement contracts for Olympic victors.

Then there were the "money" games, numerous competitions besides those held every four years at Olympia, in which the value of prizes could reach as high as what today would be half a million dollars. Theagenes of Thasos, active in the early fifth century B.C., earned what translates as around $44 million from his fourteen-hundred athletic victories. The late-sixth-century trainer Demokedes earned the equivalent of a quarter-million dollars a year after rival city-states twice lured him away with better offers.

Such lucrative payouts encouraged a professionalization of training and competition that by the Roman period had turned athletes into full-blown professionals who earned their living solely from sports. (Pliny the Younger, for instance, records the complaints of athletes who felt their free room and board provided by the emperor during training wasn't generous enough.) And this professionalization was attended with the same evils—fixing, bribery, trade unions, and raiding athletes and trainers—that characterize the modern world with its greedy, peripatetic free agents.

The "Panhellenic" nature of the ancient games—the idea that differences among city-states would be forgotten and war suspended in recognition of a common Greek heritage—also influences modern conceptions of the Olympics as international and apolitical, a venue for transcending toxic nationalism and ethnocentrism and promoting world government. Of course, this myth is true of neither the ancient nor the modern games. Both then and now, gathering peoples from different cities and countries and pitting their athletes against each other provide as much opportunity for asserting superiority and fomenting divisiveness as opportunity for multicultural fraternizing and mutual tolerance.

Commemorative offerings at festival sanctuaries, for example, were often used for crowing about military victories over rival city-states. The international crowds that frequented the games made them convenient venues for such nationalist propaganda. During the Peloponnesian War, the Athenian pretty-boy Alcibiades defended his



ostentatious participation in the chariot races—he entered seven teams—by asserting that his "magnificent embassy at Olympia" would intimidate Athens' enemies. The Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries had a similar aim, which is why they poured so much of their scant resources into producing Olympic victors.

Political rivalries between city-states frequently tainted the games, just as geopolitics does in our times. In 420 B.C. the Spartans were excluded from the Olympics for refusing to pay a fine for breaking the Olympic Truce, and a Spartan who went ahead and won a chariot race was publicly flogged. There were some tense days as everyone waited for the Spartans to attack, but they showed restraint, waiting until the next year to invade Elis, the city-state that managed the games. In 364 B.C. the Olympic site saw a full-blown armed battle between the Arcadians, who had seized control of the site from Elis, and the Eleans, who struck back during the pentathlon.

But the master of the political use of the games was Philip II of Macedon, who brilliantly manipulated the various leagues and city-states in control of the festivals in order to increase his power and influence in Greece. By ruling the festival sites, he turned the games into the instruments of Macedonian hegemony, and after his defeat of the Greek coalition at Chaironeia in 338 B.C., he built at Olympia the Philippeion, a circular temple strategically located so that every visitor and athlete would see it and be reminded of who now was really in charge of Greece. The American boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the Russians' revenge boycott of the 1984 games in Los Angeles are small political beer in comparison.

Still, there was something special going on in Greek athletics that we need to be reminded of. It is no accident that the same culture that invented athletics also invented tragedy and democracy.

None of the ancient competitive events involved team sports. Only individuals competed against other individuals, the athlete depending solely on his own ability and drive to win the crown that would be denied to all the rest—which is, one recalls, the universal condition of the leading characters in the tragic plays that filled the Greek stage. Greek tragedy always presents the isolated protagonist who must bear alone the burden of trying to achieve and then living with the unforeseen consequences of that success and the high cost of his aspirations.

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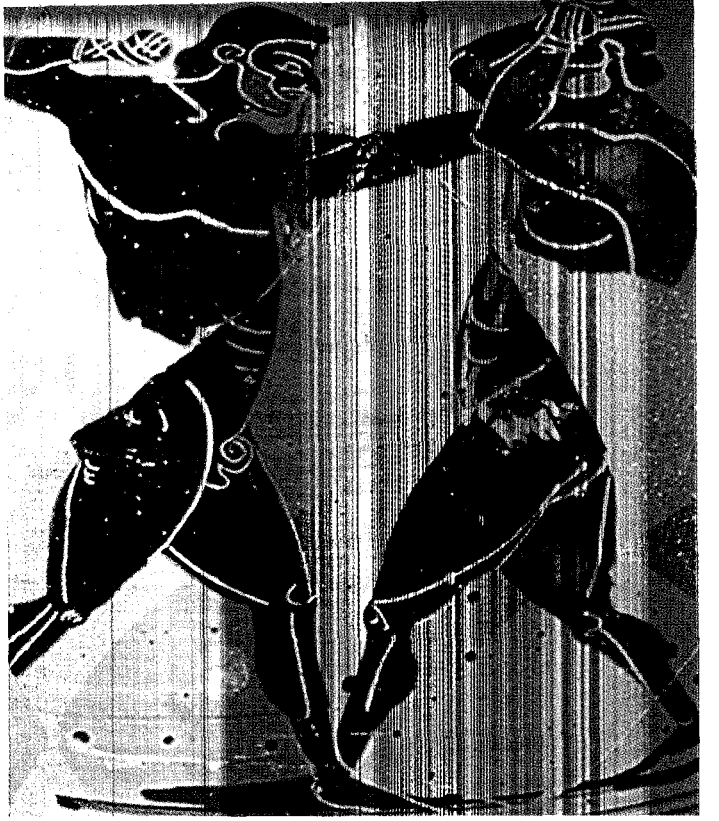
In both instances we see a harsh, unforgiving world that resists and thwarts human desire, that requires immense efforts in order for men to achieve excellence in the teeth of those limits, and that distributes sparingly the scanty rewards for that achievement. Both tragedy and sports create losers, and both demand that we acknowledge losing as a nonnegotiable reality against which we must necessarily strive in our attempts to win.

The frequent brutality of ancient sports reinforced this vision of life's hard limits. Important functionaries of the games were the *rabdoi*: judges armed with willow switches who punished fouls and false starts with a flogging. Even more indicative of the Greek acceptance of life's brutal limits were events like boxing and the *pankration*, a fierce combination of wrestling and boxing, with strangulation, finger-breaking, and eye-gouging (ostensibly forbidden) thrown in. Boxers fought with hard leather strips wrapped around their fists and pounded each other's heads until somebody gave up. Blood flowed freely, and fighters died, none more spectacularly than a certain Kreugas, who had his guts torn out by his sharp-nailed opponent.

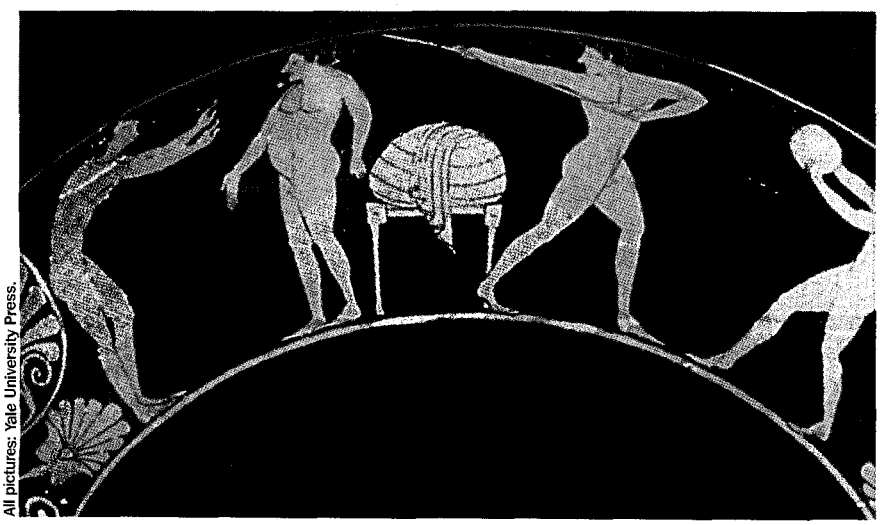
Unlike tragedy, however, the games had winners. Yet the victory was merely a transitory respite from the relentless forces of existence that ultimately defeat everyone. Pindar, the fifth-century celebrator of aristocratic athletic prowess, makes explicit this link of the tragic view of life and athletic competition: *The happiness of man grows only for a short time / and then falls to the ground, / cut down by the grim reaper*." Victory in the games is like a ray of sunshine, a *gift of the gods, / a brilliant light* that settles on men, then fades, leaving only memory behind.



But we live these days in a therapeutic world, rather than a tragic one, a world in which, as in the Caucus Race in *Alice in Wonderland*, "everybody has won, and all must have prizes." We reject the notion of permanent limits, and expect the world to cater to our whims and feelings and to answer our desires. Competition is hurtful, creating losers and wounded self-esteem, and highlighting the differences in talent and hard work that contradict our notions of equality. But here, too, the ancient Greeks are instructive. As Plato and Aristotle both observed, the radical democracy in Athens, where all citizens had equal access to nearly every office in the state, promoted a radical egalitarianism, for as Aristotle noted, democracy promotes the notion that "those who are equal in any respect are equal in all respects." A consequence of egalitarianism is a leveling of the citizens, a reduction of the distinctions based on talent and ability that give the lie to absolute equality. So relentless is this process that in Athens, Plato only half-joked, "horses and asses have a way of marching along with all the rights and dignities of freemen."

Here arises the paradox, for the Greeks and for us: How can competitive athletics, which creates winners and losers and thus a hierarchy ranking the better over the worse, coexist with the radical egalitarianism promoted by democracy?

In *Ancient Greek Athletics*, Miller claims the ancient games, apart from events like the very expensive chariot races, were an expression of democracy's equal access. This is superficially true, but misses the deeper Greek conflict between the aristocratic and democratic sensibilities, a clash also evident in tragedy, comedy, and political philosophy. The games always retained a strong aristocratic flavor, for they highlighted the *arête*—excellence—the manly virtue that was the hallmark of the aristocratic hero. This is particularly so in Homer, where athletic events are the purview of the nobility and function, as does war, to express the aristocrat's innate superiority, what Pindar called *the splendor in the blood*.



All pictures: Yale University Press.

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In ancient Athens, athletic competition embodied the conflicted feelings the non-nobles had for the aristocrats. On the one hand, the nobles, though possessing no more political power than the masses, nonetheless retained the glamour and allure of unique achievement and excellence owed not to law or procedure but to sheer superiority.

Yet at the same time, that achievement threatened the fundamental premise of democracy, that all are equal and equally capable of ruling. The games provided the masses opportunities for being "noble," at least for a while, and for showing the nobles that the ordinary citizens were as good as they—even as deep inside they suspected that they weren't. Why else would they try to imitate the nobles in all those ways Aristophanes relentlessly mocks in his comedies?

Our athletes have a similar meaning for us. At some level we know that therapeutic egalitarianism is a lie—that differences of talent and achievement are real, that losing and failure are a defining part of human life. Excellence and achievement are rare, and the cost of both is objective proof of mediocrity and defeat. We all aren't winners, and we all don't deserve prizes. That tragic truth is what sports both ancient and modern is all about. ♦

Over There

America and its European allies.

BY GARY SCHMITT

Not many people will be pleased by Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro's *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis Over Iraq*. Americans will not like reading just how much this country's image has deteriorated in Europe's eyes. Europeans, especially the Germans and the French, will complain about the book's account of their irresponsible behavior. Republicans will scowl at the depiction of the Bush administration's ham-handed approach to transatlantic relations. And Democrats will complain that the book does not assign enough blame to the White House for the current state of affairs.

Allies at War
America, Europe, and the Crisis Over Iraq
by Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro
McGraw-Hill, 266 pp., $19.95

All that, however, is precisely why every one of them should read *Allies at War*. Divided into three sections, the book opens with an account of the state of transatlantic relations before the debate over Iraq. The next section, the heart of the book, is a week-by-week account of the unfolding crisis in those relations as the war with Iraq approached. And the book ends with a brief section on what should be done to repair the damage to the alliance in the war's wake.

The first section's point is that relations have not been healthy for some time. The underlying trends—cultural, strategic, domestic, military—had been headed south well before Bush took power. Even the Clinton administration, according to Gordon and Shapiro, was "caught between the desire to preserve the alliance and the unique global responsibilities and enormous military power of the United States." Long before the 2000 presidential election, Paris was in the business of labeling the United States with derogatory titles such as "hyperpower." Yet as bad as the trend lines were in transatlantic relations, Gordon and Shapiro argue that the crisis was not inevitable. Political decisions and poor judgments on both sides of the Atlantic turned a situation that would have been difficult in any case into an open breach between allies—the likes of which had not been seen since the Suez crisis of 1956.

On Washington's part, the mistakes were large and small. Not the least of these, I believe, was the discontinuity between America's military and diplomatic strategies. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441 required Saddam to give a complete and accurate description of his weapons programs, past and present, to the U.N. by December 8, 2003. He didn't. But because the Pentagon was not ready to go to war, this "material breach" of the resolution was allowed to stand. The United States and its allies drew a line in the sand only to back up two steps. Combined with the less-than-effective diplomatic effort by Secretary Powell to get a clearly worded resolution, the effect was to give hope to the war's opponents that war could be avoided and allow them time to rally their side into firmer opposition.

But perhaps the most significant mistake Washington made was relying on a leadership model Gordon and Shapiro describe as: "If you build it, they will come." Experience with alliance relations during the Cold War and the Balkans conflicts had led many foreign-policy analysts to think, reasonably enough, that the key to getting our allies on board was decisive American leadership at the start. But in the absence of the Soviet threat or chaos on Europe's back door, would the model work? Further complicating matters was the fact that war in Iraq (as opposed to the war in Afghanistan) was understood to be a war of choice, of preemption. Not surprisingly, this was a bridge too far for the European public.

That said, according to Gordon and Shapiro, the damage to the alliance would have been a lot less if Germany and France had behaved differently. In the case of Berlin, it's clear that Chancellor Gerhard Schröder—behind in the polls in August 2002—decided to

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pander to German voters by staking out an antiwar position regardless of the damage it might do to the alliance. His "declared refusal to support the use of force against Iraq even if authorized by the U.N. Security Council was, simply put, irresponsible. It went against everything German foreign policy had stood for since the founding of the Federal Republic."

As for Paris, the expectation both here and in President Jacques Chirac's own government was that France would take its normal pound of flesh from the Americans but not, in the end, stand in Washington's way. And, indeed, as Gordon and Shapiro reveal, as late as the first week of January, Chirac was secretly sending advisers to the United States to discuss potential French military contributions to an Iraq operation. But, sometime shortly after that, in meetings here and at the U.N., the French revealed their hand: Regardless of whether WMD were found in Iraq—and hence, regardless of Security Council Resolution 1441—France would not go along with a war in Iraq. French policy would be "containment" or nothing.

For all the talk of American unilateralism, then, it was Schröder and Chirac who, regardless of U.N. resolutions, alliance needs, or even comity among E.U. partners, were determined to follow a policy of their own design. As Gordon and Shapiro note: "Of all of the members of either NATO or the European Union (a total of 23 countries), only the governments of France, Germany, and Belgium made active efforts to stand in Washington's way."

Allies at War ends with a perfectly reasonable account of why the transatlantic alliance should still matter to Americans and Europeans, what still ties us together, and what the common agenda—terrorism, Afghanistan, Iran, post-Saddam Iraq—should be in the months and years ahead. But like a couple involved in a bitter divorce proceeding, the idea of a serious reconciliation in the aftermath of Iraq seems quite distant. It's possible, of course. And, undoubtedly, it's something to be wished for.

Yet bad blood from the fight over Iraq persists; the underlying cultural and strategic divisions have not been overcome; and the lack of interest on the part of both Americans and Europeans to defer to the other's sensibilities remains largely unchanged. Although a major point of Gordon and Shapiro's analysis is that more sensible political leadership on both sides of the Atlantic could have prevented this crisis, it is a real question whether even sound statesmanship can now do much more than prevent similar crises from arising in the future. ♦

Reuters / Landov

French president Jacques Chirac embraces German chancellor Gerhard Schröder

Editing Literature

Why are modern anthologies so bad? Seventy-five years ago, things were different. BY RICHARD KOSTELANETZ

Of the making of literary anthologies, there is no end—and no visible end, as well, to the routine disappearance of such volumes. The critical intelligence required to compile meaningful selections is rarer than is commonly thought, though it need not be. Back in 1929, exactly seventy-five years ago, a pair appeared—V.F. Calverton's *Anthology of American Negro Literature* and Marcus Graham's *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry*—that are worth remembering today, for they remind us what it is that literary anthologies at their best can do.

Calverton's *Anthology of American Negro Literature* had a certain prominence in its time, not because it was the first attempt to be comprehensive about its subject, but also because it appeared early in the Modern Library, which educated American readers well into the 1960s. Calverton himself was a well-known writer in the 1930s, and he edited two other popular Modern Library anthologies, *The Making of Man: An Outline of Anthropology* (1931) and *The Making of Society: An Outline of Sociology* (1937). Born George Goetz, he lived mostly in Baltimore and died at age forty in 1940.

Calverton organized his anthology by literary genres, beginning with fiction. The book opens with the short story "Fern" by Jean Toomer, a masterpiece by a writer forgotten for

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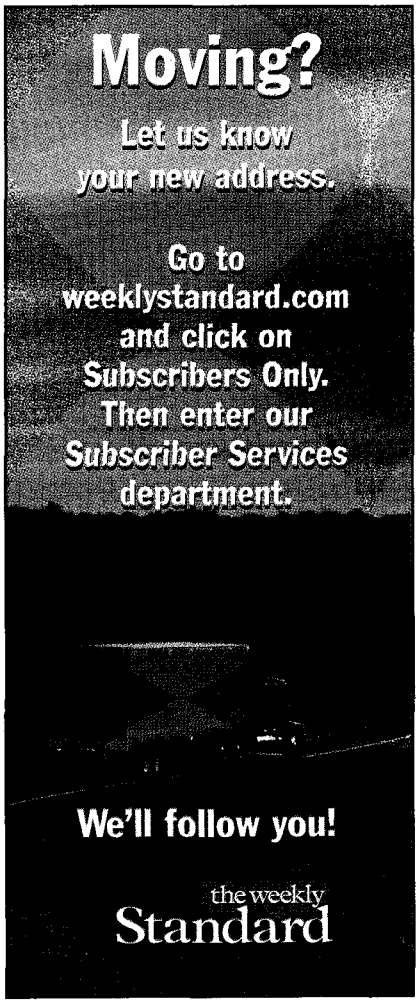
many years, in part because he was a sophisticated modernist, but also because he scarcely published in the later decades of his life. Later sections include the eighteenth-century Phillis Wheatley, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Countée Cullen, and Langston Hughes, who was then only in his twenties. Then Calverton makes a radical editorial move that was surprising in 1929, reprinting five examples apiece of spirituals, blues, and labor songs, which is to say anonymous African-American art.

The book's final section has four kinds of essays: literary, historical, sociological, and autobiographical. In the third, Calverton's selection is particularly strong, including the proto-conservative George S. Schuyler along with the publicist Walter White and the critical polemicist E. Franklin Frazier. Only in the autobiography section does Calverton make an embarrassing mistake, reprinting from Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, which was obviously fiction, albeit with a persuasive first-person narrator. Contemporary academics might wonder about the comparative slighting of W.E.B. Du Bois, who is represented only with a chapter from his second novel and one historical essay, implicitly neglecting his mercurial polemics. But since these weren't meant to last, that slight seems correct to me. Seventy-five years later, Calverton's sense of Negro American Literature still looks smart.



The other book worth remembering, *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry* was self-published and self-designed, clearly as a labor of love, by a writer who worked in printing named Shmuel Marcus, though he called himself Marcus Graham. (During the 1930s he would, under his pseudonym, edit an anarchist periodical entitled *Man!*) The book is printed on fine paper, with many words and borders in red—which, since the typeface is letterpress, means these pages passed through a printer twice.

Revolutionary Poetry opens with an elegantly written preface thanking all who made the anthology possible, beginning with a list of those who offered "moral support" (Witter Bynner, C. Erskine Scott Wood, Clement Wood, Countée Cullen, Joseph Freeman), benefactors (William Rose Benét and the playwright Percy MacKay, among others), proofreaders, and publishers—and ending with "the ideal that has aided me to gain whatever understanding of life my mind now embraces. This ideal, most misunderstood and misrepresented, most distorted and maligned of all the ideals laid bare before humanity."

That ideal, it turns out, is anarchism. "It is to this Ideal that I dedicate *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry*," Graham writes, and he was no Communist or orthodox lefty. Most of the book divides into two sections: "The Forerunners" and "The Moderns." In the first section are over one hundred contributors, including such familiar names as William Blake, William Cullen Bryant, William Lloyd Garrison, Oliver Goldsmith, Robert Herrick, Joyce Kilmer, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and James Russell Lowell—together with Shakespeare, Shelley, Poe, Swinburne, Tennyson, Thoreau, Whitman, and Wilde. The selections reiterate two themes: the exposure of social inequities and the recurring human desire for freedom. The selection from Bryant, for instance, excerpts from his "The Antiquity of Freedom," and Graham's inclusion of dozens of unfamiliar poets in the "Forerunners" section reflects the editor's wide reading.

With "The Moderns," his choice is once again eclectic, including many unfamiliar names along with Richard Aldington, Maxwell Anderson, Hilaire Belloc, Bliss Carmen, G.K. Chesterton, Padraic Collum, Theodore Dreiser, Max Eastman, Robert Frost, Louis Ginsberg (Allen Ginsberg's father), Robert Graves, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Vachel Lindsay, Edwin Markham, John Masefield, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg (whose poem "I Am the People, the Mob" also opens the book), Louis Untermeyer, and George Sylvester Viereck (who a decade later became Adolf Hitler's American publicist).

English-language poets not sufficient to establish the original synthesis of the book, Graham then reprints anonymous poems and highly selective translations from sixteen other languages. Even today, if the *Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry* appeared (and it should be reprinted), we would credit Graham with a surprising synthesis, implicitly demonstrating that it is possible for a serious independent editor to produce an anthology that looks strong a full seventy-five years later. Calverton and Graham both put together books that were *necessary* anthologies, rather than opportunistic. There's their lesson. ♦

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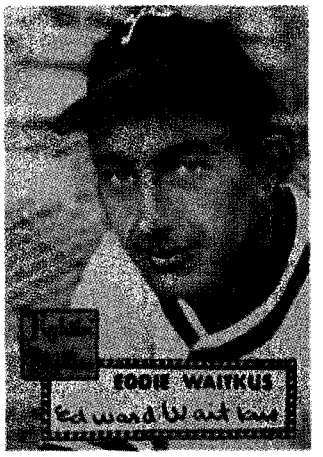
Might-Have-Beens

Baseball's sad tales of errors, balks, and missed chances. BY JAY D. HOMNICK

Men want only one thing—but it's not what mothers tell their daughters. What men really want is baseball stardom. Thwarted by circumstances, they may settle grudgingly for that other.

Among the lot of wannabes and also-rans there are a few who actually arrived at the edge of greatness—only to be rebuffed. And now Mike Robbins, a member of the Society for American Baseball Reasearch, has written *Ninety Feet From Fame* to describe these players: the utmost of the almost. These are the tales of fate's battered children, who crossed the threshold, only to step into the thresher.



Ninety Feet from Fame
Close Calls with Baseball Immortality
by Mike Robbins
Carroll & Graf, 304 pp., $15

Baseball has always been a favored sociological laboratory, highlighting the fault lines where humanity meets excellence, where greatness meets celebrity. If we can identify what strain of fortitude made Lou Gehrig the Iron Man, perhaps we can use it to help us stick to our projects. If we learn why Whitey Ford could always win big games, perhaps we can finally manage to score those big deals. So how about those who fell short? Failure of nerve and verve? Twist of fate? Third party (umpire, manager, team owner, agent, wife) at fault? Did they just never have their moment? Is there something we can learn to avoid, or is the fickle finger of fate beyond the range of our efforts to control?

Here is the story of Eddie Waitkus, prototype for the fictional Roy Hobbs in *The Natural* by Bernard Malamud. A six-foot-tall blue-eyed nineteen-year-old insurance company typist named Ruth Steinhagen had a crush on the twenty-nine-year-old bachelor when he played for her hometown Chicago Cubs. He was traded to the Phillies after the 1948 season, so she could no longer adore him daily from the stands. When his new team came to town, she booked a room at the same hotel. She left Waitkus a note to visit her; he came to her room where she shot him with a .22 caliber rifle. Eddie had been enjoying a .300 season and was poised to take his place among the first rank of players. Although he surprised doctors by recovering fully from his wounds, he returned to finish his career mired in mediocrity.

In contrast might stand the player who holds the check for greatness but leaves it unaccountably uncashed. The "great" Fritz Ostermueller pitched in the 1930s and 1940s, and he hovered always on the verge of the fabulous. An umpire said, "When you are there on the diamond with him you have got to realize that he somehow just misses being one of those pitchers that fans will still be talking about fifty years from now." Did Ostermueller miss his chance for fame, asks Robbins, or did expectations simply outstrip his true ability? He lets a *Baseball Weekly* article of 1940 answer for him: "What makes people like Ostermueller stop short of the pinnacle of success? Is it merely that luck persistently evades them when they seek its finest rewards? Somehow I think that is the answer. Life is so often like that." Fritz finished his career with a losing record, 114-115.

Then there are those players who self-destruct, perhaps averse to success and its freight. We don't need Robbins to introduce us to Shoeless Joe Jackson, but the tale of "Turkey" Mike Donlin both amuses and cautions. He seemed to have merged the virtues and vices of Joe Pepitone and Robert Downey Jr. Mike was a beloved New York playboy who divided his time between the pursuit of baseball stats and Broadway starlets. He often missed games because of drunkenness or was tossed out by umpires after showy altercations. His baseball career began in 1899. In 1902 he made "inappropriate comments" to actress Mamie Fields in the presence of her date. When the beau issued a chivalrous protest, he was slugged by the slugger. Mamie jumped in to stand by her man and she took a punch for her trouble. Donlin spent the six months of the 1902 baseball season as a guest of the state.

Later, he came back and played well again, but in 1908 he romanced and wed the actress Mabel Hite. He took off two years from the game to team up with Hite in a vaudeville act. When she tragically died of cancer at age twenty-seven, he was back within the foul lines, but always just barely. He finished his career in 1914 with an exceptional total batting average of .334, then devoted himself full-time to his thespian pursuits.

The players Robbins chronicles in *Ninety Feet From Fame* parade across baseball's stage: the lazy and the zany, the tragic and the pathetic. It's almost an Aristotelian drama, chock full of catharsis. ♦

Jay D. Homnick is a columnist at JewishWorldReview.com.

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"Why did you go like this, when you said 'happily ever after'?"

Books in Brief

***The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies, and Nations* by James Surowiecki (Doubleday, 320 pp., $24.95).** James Surowiecki, business columnist of the *New Yorker*, explores a big idea broached by the British scientist Francis Galton. It is that "groups are often smarter than the smartest people in them." Galton came to this conclusion after his analysis of a weight guessing contest at a county fair.

When eight hundred people submitted guesses as to the weight of an ox on exhibit, Galton ran them through a series of statistical tests. He assumed that the average guess of the group wouldn't even be close. ("After all, mix a few very smart people with some mediocre people and a lot of dumb people, and it seems likely you'd end up with a dumb answer.") But the crowd's judgment was unexpectedly accurate. The ox weighed 1,198 pounds, and the crowd's guess averaged at 1,197 pounds.

For a crowd to make wise decisions, Surowiecki requires four conditions. To wit: "Diversity of opinion" (each person should have some private information), "independence" (people's opinions are not determined by the opinions of those around them), "decentralization" (people are able to specialize and draw on local knowledge), and "aggregation" (some mechanism exists for turning private judgments into collective decision).

Surowiecki fortifies his argument with a grab bag of sociological, scientific, and economic concepts: policy analysis, market theory, information cascades, the general-equilibrium theorem, etc. He needlessly pushes the envelope by sometimes replacing facts with sociobabble. The Bay of Pigs invasion failed, he theorizes, because the group that planned the assault was too small and homogeneous. But the responsibility for that failure belongs not to "groupthink" but to a fatal mistake made by one man. When President John F. Kennedy abruptly withdrew American air support from the small invasion force, the Bay of Pigs invaders became sitting ducks. And what about pandemics of commercial hysteria, like the South Sea Bubble of the eighteenth century, the Japanese real-estate bubble, the bowling-alley bubble of the 1950s, and the recent tech-stock bubble? Good question. Instances of bad collective behavior "are negative proofs of this book's argument." They are, you might say, the exceptions that prove the rule. In a bubble, "all of the conditions that make groups intelligent—independence, diversity, private judgment—disappear."

On balance, the book makes an original statement that's contrary to the elitist wisdom, distilled long ago by Charles Mackay in the classic Victorian study, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*. For Mackay, "crowds were never wise." Mackay's verdict, the author points out, is shared by such people as Thoreau, Nietzsche, Carlyle, and Bernard Baruch. In place of their rhetoric, he offers a battery of empirical evidence. It's a convincing case for the democratic idea.

—*Martin Levin*

***Confessions of a Slacker Mom* by Muffy Mead-Ferro (Da Capo, 152 pp., $12.95).** Look around any playgroup these days, and you're likely to find a few folks who seem to view parenting as a competitive sport, buying tummy-phones to pipe Mozart in utero and registering for infant swimming classes and toddler violin lessons. Their homes feature bubble-wrapped hearths, diaper-wipe warmers, and elaborate scrapbooks for each month of Junior's life. Their children never have to share more than the roof over their heads, each having been equipped with room, toys, computer, phone, and television.

Then there are parents like Muffy Mead-Ferro. The closest she got to competitive parenting, she writes in *Confessions of a Slacker Mom*, was shopping for a four-page list of nursery essentials for her firstborn. When a friend expecting her third child called, Mead-Ferro shared her fear that her daughter might arrive before her European bassinet. The friend laughed, explaining that her son had slept in a crab crate his first six months.

That was the beginning of Mead-Ferro's taking a harder look at the cur-

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rent conventional wisdom about child rearing—and the lessons it unwittingly imparts. During her own childhood on a Wyoming cattle ranch, the children had less (so valued possessions more), the toys did less (so the children did more), and no one waited in mall lines for pictures with Santa. Also, since her parents rarely attended the children's sporting events, they joined teams and played their hardest because they wanted to, not because Dad was screeching from the sidelines.

You may want to put a copy of this book on your coffee table the next time you host playgroup.

—Susie Currie

***The Presumed Alliance: The unspoken conflict between Latinos and Blacks and what it means for America* by Nicolás C. Vaca (HarperCollins, 256 pp., $24.95).** The good thing about this book is that it makes a powerful case for why racial-identity politics are divisive and destructive. The bad thing is that this conclusion—an obvious one given the facts adduced—is neither drawn nor even considered by the author.

Most of the book consists of case studies of local conflicts between blacks and Latinos from Miami to Los Angeles—some merely bureaucratic, others actually violent. The author overstates the extent to which this friction is news, but he has done something useful by documenting it in detail. As Linda Chavez has noted, the "presumed alliance" between the two groups—against, one supposes, a common white oppressor—is "less a fact than it is a product of wishful thinking on the part of civil-rights activists." According to one survey cited by Vaca, half of Latinos and blacks agreed with the general proposition that "ethnic groups were in conflict." Half of the Latinos said that blacks were the group with whom they were most in conflict, while two-thirds of blacks said that they were most in conflict with Latinos.

The common denominator in Vaca's case studies is that the political leaders of both groups are locked in a zero-sum struggle over racial spoils: affirmative-action employment aimed at one level or another of racial proportionality, special access to and treatment under other government programs, bragging rights over who has suffered the most in the past, and, in Vaca's phrase, "who's the leader of the civil-rights band." Under those circumstances, it is no wonder that friction occurs between the competing groups.

And the only way that the conflict can end is if race and ethnicity are no longer the bases for political organization and for special treatment by the government. But Vaca does not discuss this possibility, and even seems to be hostile to it (which is all the more disappointing since elsewhere in the book he wisely comes down against the Latino anti-assimilationists). About two-thirds of the way through the book, a California Latino activist demands in frustration, "It's time the [school] board stops playing these racist games and hires the best-qualified candidate." But the moment passes and this novel suggestion is heard no more.

—Roger Clegg

***Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* by Susan Jacoby (Metropolitan, 417 pp., $27.50).** Alarmed by what she perceives as the integration of religion into modern United States policy, Susan Jacoby offers a new defense of secularism. Part history, part polemic, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* examines secularism in the United States, especially its role in government and public policy. Aligning secularism with the political left, Jacoby clearly seeks to fire her own shots in the culture wars, taking direct aim at the religious right.

Jacoby's account of history is a bit selective when it comes to the watershed events that, in her mind, establish the United States as a secular democracy. For example, the book rightly points out that the Constitution makes no mention of God, but mainly ignores its companion document, the Declaration of Independence, which is laden with religious philosophy. Much is made of Thomas Jefferson's reference to a "wall of separation" between church and state, but there is nothing about other Founders, such as James Madison, who saw things differently.

The history *Freethinkers* sketches of lesser-known figures—agnostics, atheists, secularists, and deists who rejected religion—is interesting. Here Jacoby seeks to inspire today's secularists, who she believes have been intimidated by the religious right, with stories about outspoken and influential freethinkers such as Thomas Paine, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Robert Ingersoll.

As the book approaches more recent times, however, Jacoby unfortunately trades a historian's objectivity for partisan rhetoric. Complaining that President Bush delivered a major address at St. Patrick's Cathedral in the language of faith, she was troubled that no speaker "represented my views." Of course, Bush has spoken in other locations, and this was a prayer service. Jacoby reserves special disdain for a speech Justice Scalia delivered at a divinity school, an address "so willfully oblivious to the Constitution's grounding in human rather than divine authority" that it should have elicited calls for impeachment.

One of the difficult distinctions that Jacoby does not sufficiently engage is the role of religion in public life and leadership. When Americans choose a religious person as president, is he expected to seal off his views from his work? Arguably a president's most important work is not the bills he signs but what he says from the bully pulpit of the presidency. It is inconvenient for Jacoby's argument but, in times of war and difficulty, Americans look to their political leadership for a word of inspiration and faith, not just a statement of secular reason.

—David Davenport

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Parody

The U.S. unveiled a raft of conspiracy charges against Abu Hamza Masri, a radical Islamic cleric in London who was arrested Thursday by British police in response to a U.S. extradition request. Mr. Hamza, a former nightclub bouncer in London who became a fiery Islamic preacher, has expressed admiration for Osama bin Laden. Mr. Hamza lost both hands and an eye in Afghanistan during the 1980s."

—News item

EMPLOYEE Masri, Abu (Fat Sid) Hamza

Customer complaints, Oct.-Dec.

Dear Sir:
I've enjoyed going to Club Phat-wah for years, but your new bouncer has terrible guest-relations skills. For instance, questions like "How many Zionist pig-dogs in your party?" are inappropriate for those arriving. For those leaving, a simple "Goodnight" is better than "Allah hates you."

Dear Sir:
I don't know how your bouncer knew I was a record executive, but he insisted I listen to his rap demo before he would allow me into the club. "Infidel Bling-Bling" will appeal to very few listeners, and, while his injuries are regrettable, he's misguided to say "the One-Eyed Monsta is pure money."

Dear Sir:
I used to enjoy the VIP room at Phat-wah, but it has changed. The absence of women combined with the preponderance of robed men in sunglasses is a bit stifling. I also feel mules and grenades should be left outside the club.

Dear Sir:
I don't think bouncers should be armed in the first place. Even if they are, though, the tradition of celebratory gunfire has no place in the West End. And at the very least the firearm must be aimed vertically.

Dear Sir:
If it is really true that the Koran prohibits idolatry, then I suppose your bouncer was at least acting on principle in ripping down the posters of Mary J. Blige. It seemed inconsistent, though, when he started putting up promo fliers for some rapper called DJ Cyclopz.

Dear Sir:
This might sound mad, but I could have sworn your bouncer was trying to stone me.

the weekly Standard
June 7, 2004

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Where Else Can They Go?

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Now that we are gearing up for another presidential campaign, we should clear the air of one common misconception, namely, that the so-called median voter theorem tells the whole story by saying that candidates from the left and the right will gravitate toward the middle. This prediction rests on two basic propositions. The first is that voter sentiments, to the extent that they can be aligned on a single axis, take a bell-shaped form, with most voters concentrated in the middle. The second is that all voters, no matter where they are located in this one-dimensional space, will gravitate toward the candidate whose views are closest to their own. Given these two assumptions, each candidate in a two-person general election has an incentive to move from the middle of the distribution of his own party to the middle of the distribution of the electorate. In principle, that movement should continue until the two candidates just about touch each other.

The reason candidates migrate to the center is captured in the expression, where else can they go? Thus the voters on the right and left of the spectrum will dutifully stay with their candidate even as he marches toward the center. No matter how far the candidate strays, the unhappy voters at the edges will still vote their interest.

There is of course an undoubted kernel of truth in this analysis, for it helps explain some of the dizzying contradictions in electoral politics as candidates artlessly recalibrate their positions from the primary to the general election. But it is equally evident that this brief account does not tell the whole story, even if we grant the truth of its assumptions. Move as they may, the candidates on both sides still retain distinctive personas throughout the campaign. **What forces prevent perfect compression toward the median voter?**

The conceptual mistake in the standard analysis assumes that each voter has only a dichotomous choice between two candidates, so that the *intensity* of preference, as measured by the political distance between the preferred candidate and the voter, simply does not matter. That might be true in a world in which citizens only vote. But potential voters also supply financial support, free labor, and vocal support for their candidates. These critical elements significantly depend on the level of affection that any candidate for electoral office retains with her or his original base. If the disillusioned in the ranks even bother to vote for their candidate of choice, they may sit on their hands when it comes to funding, work, and advocacy. That lack of commitment could reduce resources and easily spell the difference between victory and defeat in a close election.

Obviously more is at work. Even so, just this one complication of the median voter theorem helps explains why politicians of all persuasions work desperately to be all things to all people. It is much easier to write about election campaigns than to run them.

—Richard A. Epstein

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